

Rolling Stone

Issue 769 December 2015
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It Ain't
Easy Being
**Keith
Richards**

**Elvis
Costello**
My Life in
10 Songs

**Rod Stewart's
Comeback**

**Obama's
Climate
Crusade**

The Rolling Stone
Interview

**Sarah
Blasko's
Love Buzz**

**Ed
Sheeran**
Man of the People

On the road with
the world's biggest
male pop star



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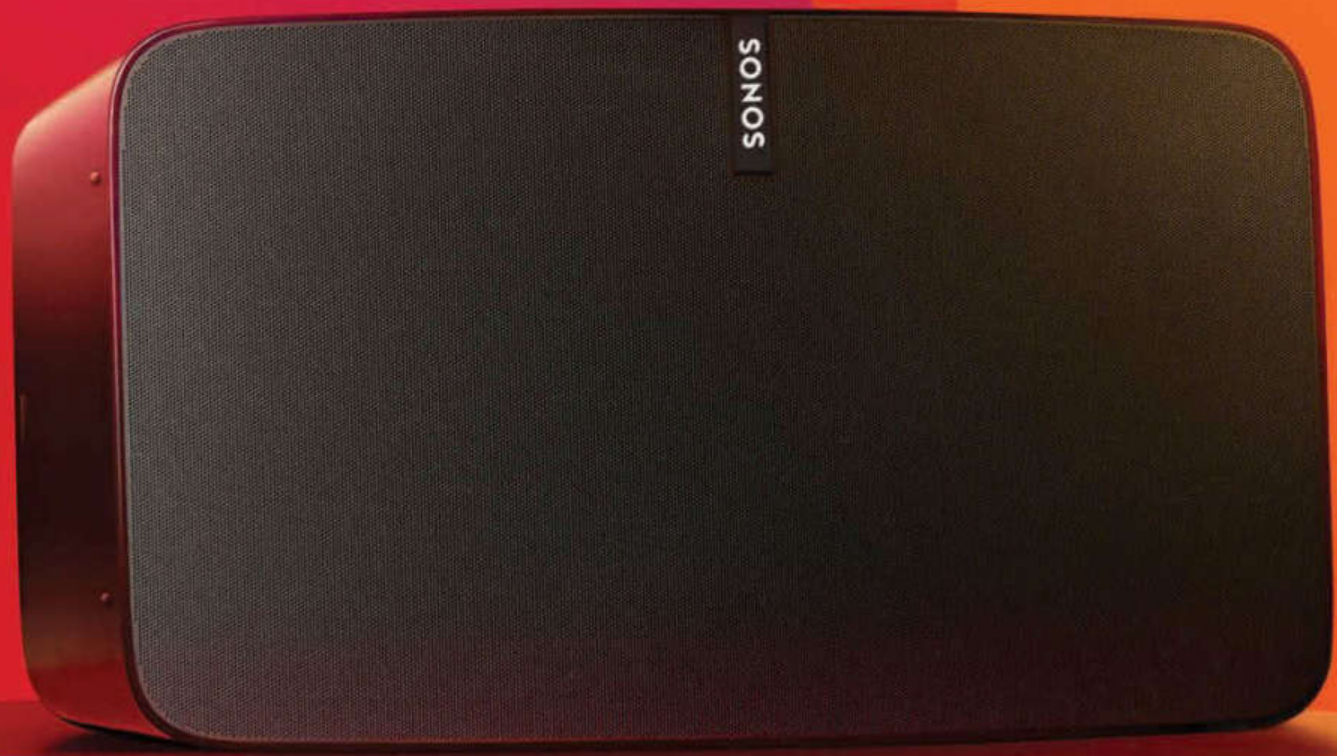
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“ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS”

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ON THE COVER Ed Sheeran photographed by **Ben Watts**.

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LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE



Phil's New Gig?

INSPIRED IDEA GETTING Phil Jamieson to interview the chaps from Cold Chisel (RS 768). If ever there was a band to inherit Chisel's crown, it would surely be . . . well, it wouldn't be Grinspoon, but they're still fun to watch. And Phil proved himself an entertaining interviewer. Ever thought about making him a permanent staff member?

Gary Wallace,
Lake's Entrance, NSW

Howard's End

I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER to laugh or cry while reading your interview with Terence Howard (RS 768). The man is quite clearly, gloriously bonkers – it would be endearing if there wasn't a psychologically scary side to him. And you have to feel for anyone who

saw their father stab another man in line while waiting to see Santa. Did he ever have a chance to be normal?

Dan West,
Downer, ACT

Violent Night

GREAT TO HEAR THAT VIOLENT Soho have been hard at work writing and recording. *Hungry Ghost* was a monster of a record, but it's pretty long in the tooth to still be touring on the back of. Here's hoping the new

Duran's 14th studio album. They have been receiving great reviews.

Michelle Summerhill,
Via e-mail

Hank Hiddleston?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY people get so excited to see Tom Hiddleston in films. He was fairly average in that *Avengers* movie, but people went nuts over him bellowing on about being Loki. Now he's getting to play the legend-

"It was an inspired idea getting Phil Jamieson to interview the chaps from Cold Chisel."

album has tunes to rival "Saramona Said" and "Covered In Chrome". I hope so, as they're fast becoming my favourite Aussie band.

Anthony Dodds
Hurlstone Park, NSW

Gods Among Us

AS AN AVID DURANIE, I WAS very excited when John Taylor (bass player) from Duran Duran said in an interview recently that they will be touring Australia next year. Thanks to all at ROLLING STONE for promoting *Paper Gods*, Duran

ary Hank Williams? On the strength of what? Come on, surely they could have found an American with the chops to play one of the USA's original cowboys?

Doug Peters,
Cairns, Qld

Kermit's Lament

LOVED THE TV SPECIAL IN your last issue, but I'm sad about the reboot of the Muppets. How can you improve on perfection?

Haley Kevin,
Concord, NSW

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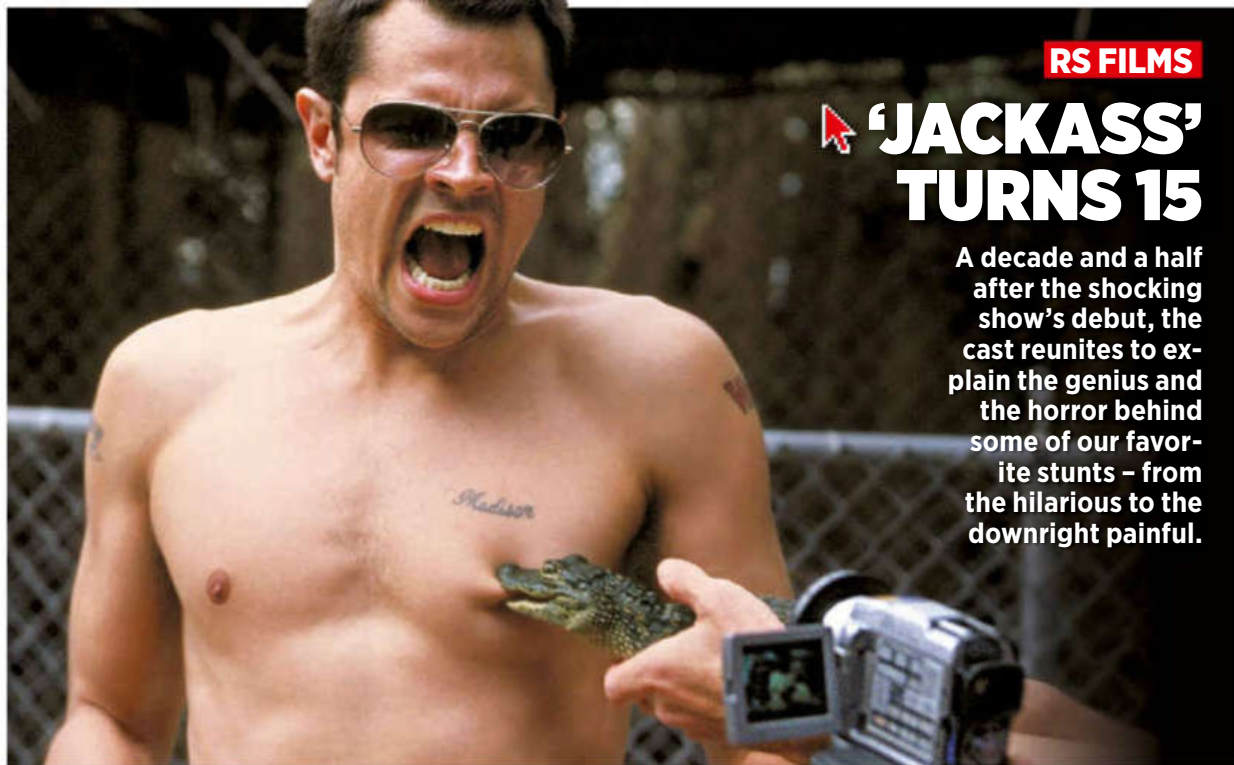
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Rolling Stone

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RS FILMS

 **'JACKASS'
TURNS 15**

A decade and a half after the shocking show's debut, the cast reunites to explain the genius and the horror behind some of our favorite stunts - from the hilarious to the downright painful.



LIST

 **50 GREATEST
HAIR METAL
ALBUMS OF ALL
TIME**

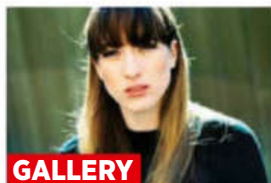
The definitive list of the greatest albums from the era of hair-spray, man-makeup and lace-up leather trousers.



GALLERY

 **NORTHEAST
PARTY HOUSE
TOUR DIARY**

The Melbourne dance lords are on their first big overseas tour, hitting Europe, the UK and the States. They'll be sending photo evidence as it happens.



GALLERY

 **10 ARTISTS
YOU NEED
TO KNOW
GET COOL NOW**

When people ask you what new music they should be listening to, you should have this page bookmarked. Seriously.



VIDEO

 **THE BILLION
VIEW CLUB
YOUTUBE'S 10
MOST WATCHED**

The music videos racking up the most plays on YouTube. Warning - may contain traces of "Gangnam Style"...



Skrillex

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"A 40-year-old bully tried to fight the 35-year-old nerd." —Patrick Carney on Jack White confronting him at a bar

Random Notes



Taylor & Mick Get Ya-Ya's Out

Taylor Swift's 1989 tour has featured huge guest stars, from Steven Tyler to Justin Timberlake, but no one at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena was prepared when she welcomed "one of the greatest entertainers of all time - my friend Mick Jagger". Mick and Taylor powered through "Satisfaction", with Taylor showing off some wild new stage moves. Later, she simply tweeted, "Drops mic."



SCHOOL OF ROCK Slash made his first visit to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, where he took a picture of Chuck Berry's lyrics to "School Days". "I was impressed!" Slash says.



BILLIE MAKES THE A-LIST

Billie Joe Armstrong threw out the first pitch for hometown team the Oakland Athletics. "Pitching for the A's was a childhood dream come true," he says.



IT'S MADONNA, BITCHES! "I don't follow the rules, and I'm not about to start," said Madonna to RS earlier this year. She didn't disappoint at the opening night of her *Rebel Heart* tour in Montreal, performing a set that included sexy nuns swinging on crucifixes during "Holy Water." The arena-rock highlight came when she strapped on a Flying V to bust out power chords on "Burning Up." "I'm a Leo," she said. "We like to be the center of attention."

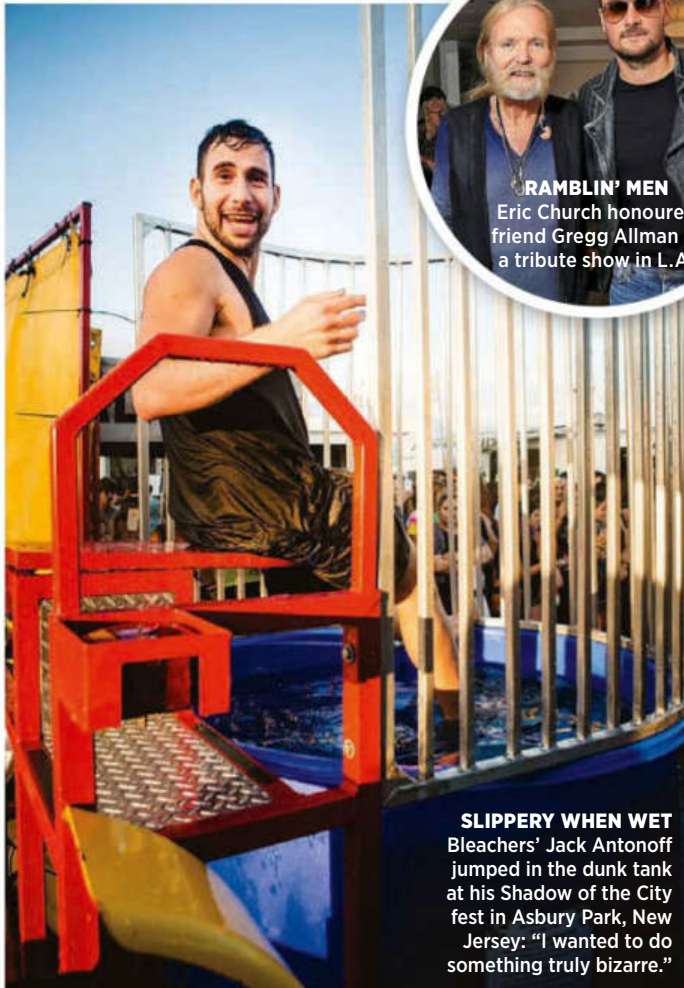


Depp's Rock Monsters

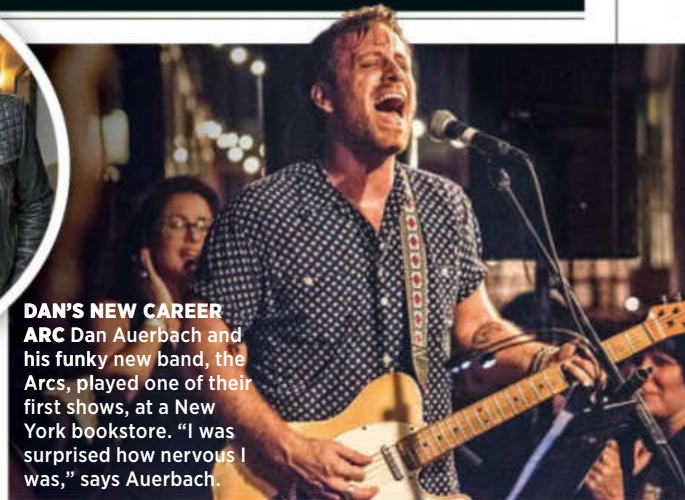
These kids might have a future! Johnny Depp, Joe Perry (above) and frontman Alice Cooper played their third show ever under the name Hollywood Vampires at Brazil's massive Rock in Rio fest. "It was incredible!" says Perry of the set, which was almost entirely covers such as "Whole Lotta Love" and "School's Out". For Depp, the band has been a long time coming: "Music has been the driving force in everything I've done."



POWER COUPLE Cara Delevingne and Annie Clark of St. Vincent at the Burberry show at London Fashion Week. "Being in love with my girlfriend is a big part of why I'm so happy," said Clark earlier this year.



RAMBLIN' MEN
Eric Church honoured friend Gregg Allman at a tribute show in L.A.



DAN'S NEW CAREER
ARC Dan Auerbach and his funky new band, the Arcs, played one of their first shows, at a New York bookstore. "I was surprised how nervous I was," says Auerbach.



SHUCK IT OFF Farmers Jeff and Teresa Greenwood honoured Taylor Swift with a 12-acre corn maze. "I've always been amazed by her," says Jeff. Swift approves: "Lawn goals," she said.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HATE FLASH; GETTY IMAGES; SACHA LECCA; SUMMERS FARM; GRIFFIN LOTZ; GETTY IMAGES

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Rock & Roll

Bob Dylan's Lost Sixties Treasures

A new box set traces
Dylan's electric
transformation
By Andy Greene

BETWEEN JANUARY 1965 and February 1966, Bob Dylan wrote and recorded his first three electric albums, breaking from folk music and forever changing the course of his career and of rock itself. And as his exhaustive new studio-outtakes box set reveals, the journey toward the perfection of *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde* was just as fascinating [Cont. on 14]

**HOW DOES IT
FEEL?** Dylan
in 1965.

DYLAN

[Cont. from 13] as the final products. *The Cutting Edge 1965-1966: The Bootleg Series Vol. 12*, out November 6th, offers a definitive look at the development of Dylan's plugged-in sound, unveiling embryonic takes and alternate versions of some of his greatest songs, including "Subterranean Homesick Blues", "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Visions of Johanna".

"At the beginning, most songs were fairly shapeless," says organist Al Kooper, a key collaborator on *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*. "Only little by little did they come together."

The collection reveals that six months before the Byrds turned "Mr. Tambourine Man" into a folk-rock smash, Dylan himself saw its possibilities, taking a clumsy, abortive stab at recording a drums-and-electric-guitar version. ("The drums are driving me mad," he says at the end.) It shows how Dylan attempted to record some *Blonde on Blonde* tracks with future members of the Band before opting for the subtler touch of Nashville musicians: Their "Visions of Johanna" is almost another song altogether (complete with lyric tweaks – "useless and small" instead of "useless and all"), rollicking where the released version is hushed. And it reveals how much fun Dylan was having in the studio, especially during *Highway 61 Revisited* – he improvises a shout-out to guitarist Michael Bloomfield during a version of "Sitting on a Barbed Wire Fence", and he cracks up uncontrollably at early attempts to deploy the police whistle in the title track.

The Cutting Edge is available in a six-disc and a two-disc version, as well as a monster limited-edition 18-disc set that includes every single take of every song from the three albums. In all, it documents a process that is, in its own way, as dramatic as Dylan's most public going-electric moment, at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. "A lot of people don't realise what an incredi-



ON HIGHWAY 61 Dylan recording an early take of "Like a Rolling Stone", June 1965. The song's sessions fill an entire *Cutting Edge* disc.

ble risk he took," says a source close to the Dylan camp. "Why risk alienating his gigantic audience? But the burst of creativity was remarkable. The music goes to so many different places, and no two things are done the same way twice."


The complete "Like a Rolling Stone" sessions take up an entire CD, tracing the meandering path the epochal song took over two days, from an indifferent-sounding waltz to a ferocious, world-shaking rock hit. "People are going to get lost in that," says critic and Dylan scholar Greil Marcus.

Dylan approached each of the three albums differently. He had just three days to record the half-acoustic *Bringing It All Back Home*, and nailed songs including "Gates of Eden" in single takes. He spent

considerably more time on *Highway 61*, and the process was nearly chaotic. "The recording of *Highway 61* was unbelievably disorganised," says Kooper, who famously sneaked into the session and ended up playing organ, an instrument he barely knew, on "Like a Rolling Stone". "It was an unprofessional situation, exemplified by how I ended up playing on it! But *Blonde on Blonde* was a thoroughly professional situation. I knew all the songs before we went in. I could teach them to the band before Bob got them."

The *Blonde on Blonde* sessions are the richest vein tapped by the set, yielding far more outtakes than the other two LPs. There's a groovier "Stuck Inside of Mobile With the Memphis Blues Again", with Dylan syncopating the vocals, and an unnerving-

ly danceable "Just Like a Woman" that's missing the line about amphetamines and fog. By that point, Dylan had slowed his process so he could fine-tune lyrics and experiment with wildly different arrangements. In Nashville, says Kooper, "we'd show up at the studio at noon and go home around 6 a.m. But we were only recording a small percentage of that time. Some days, we'd sit there for six hours and play ping-pong while he worked on lyrics."

The Cutting Edge is the third Bootleg Series collection released in the past two years, following *Another Self Portrait* and *The Basement Tapes Complete* – and the Dylan camp is nowhere near done raiding the vaults. "We've always wanted to do one of pre-album stuff where Bob is just singing songs in Greenwich Village coffeehouses," says the Dylan source. "We'd also love to revisit *Blood on the Tracks*, *Infidels*, *Oh Mercy* and the gospel albums." 

Another Side of Peak-Era Dylan Five revelations from 'The Cutting Edge 1965-1966'

'Visions of Johanna' with the Hawks

Shortly before heading down to Nashville, Dylan attempted to record this surreal song with the Hawks (later known as the Band) in a New York studio. It's as fast and aggressive as the released version is gentle, yet somehow it manages to be just as gorgeous.

'She's Your Lover Now' – Take Six'

Dylan and the Hawks spent 19 takes trying to nail this stunningly bitter song about a nasty breakup. "You just sit around and ask for ashtrays," Dylan snarls. "Can't you reach?" It wasn't released until 1991, with the first Bootleg Series. "Maybe it was just too mean," says Greil Marcus.

'Desolation Row Piano Demo'

The first 10 years of Tom Waits' career in a two-minute song fragment: an alternate-reality version of what one of Dylan's most sprawling songs could have been, featuring him at the piano delivering the haunting, apocalyptic lyrics over chords that are almost too tender.

'Like a Rolling Stone' – Take Eleven'

In two days of sessions, Dylan and his band managed only two full takes of his most famous song. The first is the released version; this is the other, a nearly frantic, off-kilter take with vocals that are less commanding and immediate – though the drumming is arguably more exciting.

'One of Us Must Know (Sooner or Later)' – Take 19'

Pianist Paul Griffin is the unsung hero of Dylan's electric breakthrough, and nowhere is that more clear than on this killer outtake. (If you can't get enough, check out the superdeluxe set, which includes isolated audio from all four tracks of the master recording.)



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Macklemore Rides Again

Mopeds, Melle Mel and a new sound: Inside his new LP

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

AN HOUR BEFORE THEY TOOK the stage at MTV's Video Music Awards in Los Angeles on August 30th, Macklemore and Ryan Lewis were sure their set was going to be a total disaster. The Seattle rapper-producer duo had just finished the final run-through of the performance – an ambitious outdoor version of their new single, "Downtown", involving tricky choreography and multiple guest vocalists – and nothing was going right. "We watched the playback, and Ryan was bummed," says Macklemore. "He was like, 'Dude, this isn't good. It's going to be a shitshow.'"

In the end, their first televised performance in more than a year went off without a hitch – but it was a high-stakes moment for more reasons than one. The last awards show Macklemore and Lewis performed at was the 2014 Grammys, where their platinum-selling *The Heist* beat out Kendrick Lamar and others for Best Rap Album. The backlash that followed was swift and brutal: Many fans saw them as symbols of the advantages that white artists have even in a historically black genre. Last autumn, the rapper – who got sober in 2008, but relapsed into drug use during his sudden rise to fame – got clean again, and he says the 12-step philosophy has helped him deal with criticism. "What people think of me is none of my business," he says. "If I live on the Internet, looking for public approval, I'm going to be miserable."

The day after the VMAs, Macklemore is calling from a mountain cabin in eastern Washington, where he and Lewis are finishing their follow-up to *The Heist*. "I'm feeling great about this album," he says. "It has a diversity of sounds and concepts." The "Downtown" video has been viewed more than six million times on YouTube; the song is the result of an 18-month-long recording process. What began as a whimsical tune about the mopeds they'd bought to relieve the monotony of touring became a five-minute epic with shades of Seventies rock, show tunes and more. "There was a long time when I didn't think I was

"What people think of me is none of my business," says Macklemore




**DOWNTOWN
FUNK**
Macklemore performing during the VMAs

going to be able to capture what was in our heads," Lewis says.

At one point, Macklemore, who'd been listening to a Sirius XM old-school rap station, tried out some Eighties cadences, at Lewis' suggestion. "I was like, 'We have to reach out to the dudes that came up with this style,'" Macklemore says. "It didn't feel right to appropriate that tone without seeing if they at least liked it." Luckily, their manager is friendly with Big Daddy Kane, who convinced OG MCs Grandmaster Caz, Melle Mel and Kool

Moe Dee to fly to Seattle and record vocals. (Lewis had to give up control over the session: "I gave them one note of feedback," he recalls. "Kool Moe Dee was like, 'Are you trying to tell Melle Mel how to rap?!'")

Macklemore and Lewis hope to release the new LP by the end of 2015 – three full years after *The Heist*. "I've never been the type of person who's going to turn out a mixtape every few months," says Macklemore. "I needed to figure out what I wanted to say. So I had to live." 



IN THE STUDIO

LOFTY AMBITIONS
Dempsey hard at work at The Loft in Chicago

Paul Dempsey's Chicago Recording Sessions

Something For Kate frontman journeys to Wilco's studio to make second solo album

PAUL DEMPSEY IS EIGHT DAYS INTO recording his new solo album, the follow-up to 2009's *Everything Is True*, and already he's done the basic tracking on as many songs. "I guess it's faster than [recording with] *Something For Kate*," he offers. "But that's because there's three people all having to sort of get their parts and get happy with their parts. I'm playing every instrument, so I just kind of get it the way I want fairly quickly and there's not much discussion, because I'm getting my way all the time."

Dempsey began working on the 11 songs he's recording with producer Tom Schick at the Loft in Chicago – AKA the studio owned by Wilco – during *Something For Kate*'s 2014 tour in support of their 20th anniversary. Tentative song titles include "Be Somebody" ("which sounds quite aspirational, and it's quite the opposite"); "Strange Loop"; "Hey History" ("It's about history, but it's sort of addressing all of history as if it's an individual"); and an eight-minute epic called "The True Sea". "It builds really slowly, and it builds to quite a big climax," says Dempsey. "It's a song about space – as in deep space, but also personal space; it's kind of both of those things. It's a

song about two people, but at the same time it's a song about vastness.

"The album's going to be quite different sonically [to *Everything Is True*]," he continues. "It's got quite a different range of textures and sounds. There's going to be some songs that people go, 'Wow, that's something I haven't heard from you before.' And there's also stuff that people are going to recognise, a familiar tone to my lyrics and stuff like that."

Dempsey ended up at the Loft more by luck than design – he wanted to work with Schick (Real Estate, Ryan Adams), whom he thought was based in New York, only to find that the producer had moved to Chicago to run the Loft. As a Wilco fan Dempsey found entering the space "nerve-racking and exciting", and has revelled in the fact that "everything I could need is here and ready to go".

As for why he's opted to work on a solo album rather than a follow-up to *Something For Kate*'s last studio effort, 2012's *Leave Your Soul To Science*, he says, "They're probably going to alternate from now on. I'm really lucky to have both in my life, and *Something For Kate* is not going anywhere. It's a bit unconventional, but I guess there might only be a solo record and a *Something For Kate* record every kind of five years."

Dempsey is still searching for a title for his new LP, but is sure of one thing: "I've ruled out *Boys Just Want To Have Fun*."

"It's going to be quite different sonically [to 'Everything Is True']."

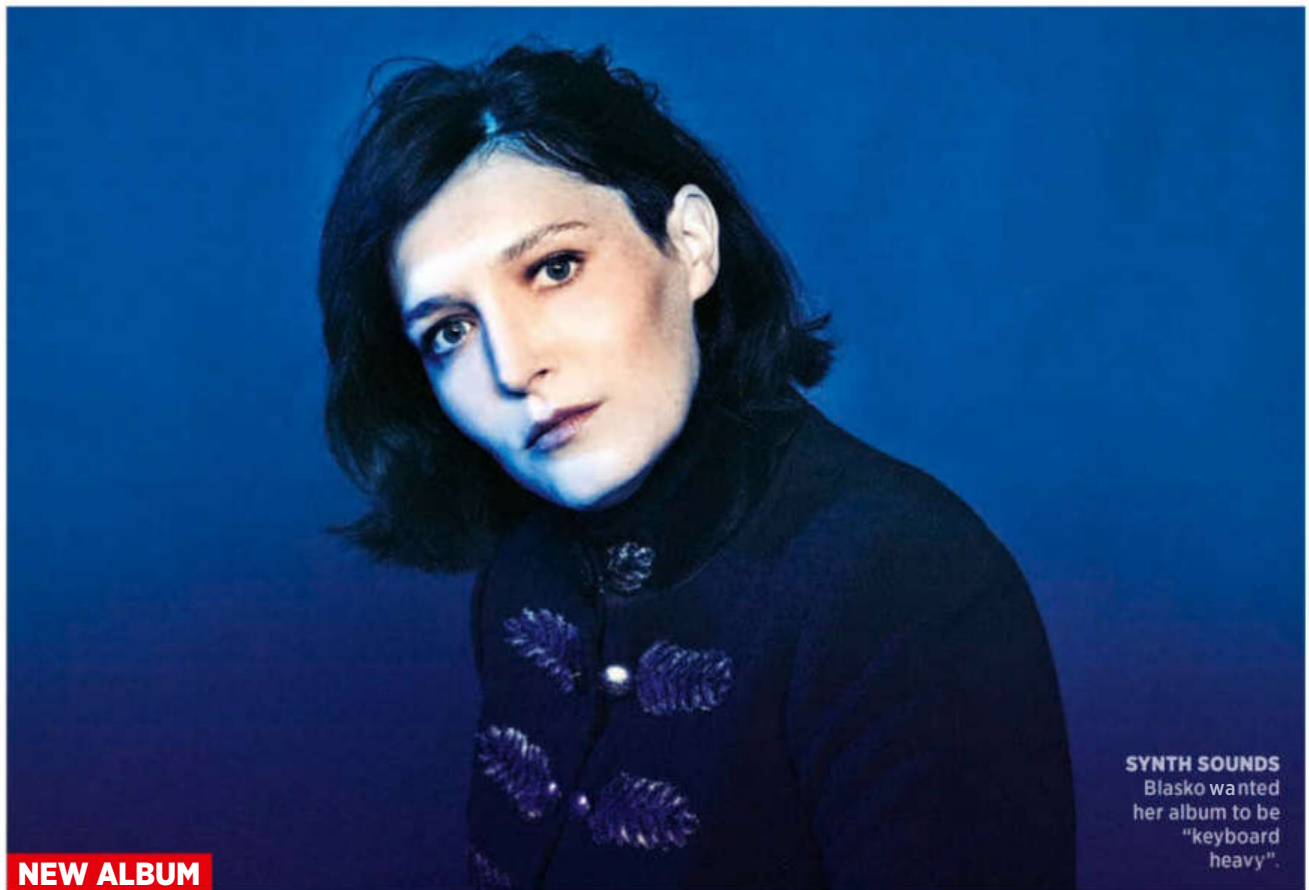
TRIBUTE

The Cruel Sea's James Cruickshank

James Cruickshank, best known as guitarist and keyboard player for the Cruel Sea, passed away in early October after a 12 month battle with bowel cancer. He was 53. Born in Melbourne in 1962, Cruickshank played in indie-pop band the Widershins before joining the Cruel Sea in 1989. He played on all six of the band's albums, including 1993 breakthrough *The Honeymoon Is Over*, which won five ARIA awards. When the Cruel Sea slowed, following 2001's *Where There's Smoke*, Cruickshank stayed busy, releasing three solo albums, including 2011's *Note To Self*. An in-demand collaborator, Cruickshank worked with singer/songwriter Gyan and cartoonist Michael Leunig on their 2005 album, *Billy the Rabbit*, and recently as a member of Mick Harvey's backing band. Edward Clayton-Jones, friend and former collaborator with the Bad Seeds, paid tribute on Facebook. "He never lost his sense of humour even where so many would whine and complain," wrote Clayton-Jones. "When it became apparent he may not win [his battle] he decided to sign on with Mick Harvey's... tour of Europe. Mick tells me his organ playing was unbelievably good. James finished on a high note. A few days ago he was swimming in the sea and now he's gone." **M.T.**



ROD YATES



SYNTH SOUNDS
Blasko wanted her album to be "keyboard heavy".

NEW ALBUM

Sarah Blasko's Love Buzz

Singer-songwriter mines a vein of happiness on her fifth record By Rod Yates

WHEN SARAH BLASKO RECORDED 2012's *I Awake* in Atlantic Studios in Stockholm, she affixed photos of women she admired to the wall of her vocal booth – Aretha Franklin, Carole King, Nina Simone – to aid her performances. As she laid down the vocals for her fifth album, *Eternal Return*, at the Grove Studios on the Central Coast earlier this year, she didn't need to look outwards for inspiration. "I was heavily pregnant when I was [singing], it was quite intense," she smiles. "You feel like you have super powers when you're pregnant, but you sort of feel terrible at the same time. But there's no bullshit when you're in that state, everything feels very primal. I can hear [it in] my singing; I'm just singing in a very honest, simple way."

On this warm early spring morning, Blasko is sitting in a park in Sydney's inner west, slowly working her way through a

pot of tea as a scene so suburban it could be a painting plays out in front of her – a cricket game meanders on the nearby oval, a bustling cafe delivers food to families lounging on the grass. At one point, a soccer ball lands nearby and she flinches. "I can't tell you how many times I've been hit in the head by a ball," she laughs. "It's like my head has a radar."

In a week's time, Blasko will take the stage at the Sydney Opera House to perform *Eternal Return* in its entirety as part of the Graphic Festival. While she refers to *I Awake* and 2009's *As Day Follows Night* as companion albums of sorts ("*As Day Follows Night* is quite minimal, and I suppose *I Awake* was broadening on that sound by having an orchestra"), she sees *Eternal Return* as being more connected to her debut, 2004's *The Overture and the Underscore*, "because of the keyboards and it's a bit more pop". It's also an album about love – or, rather, the wonders of the early stages of love – and was penned when the 39-year-old was in the

throes of falling for her partner, Dave Miller, with whom she had her son, Jerry, around three months ago. Written largely on an old synth called a Prophet ("I wanted it to be a keyboard heavy album, I hadn't played around with keyboards for years," she says), when you combine the subject matter with the fact the album was conceived in Australia with collaborators Ben Fletcher, David Hunt and Nick

Wales, as opposed to the solitude in which Blasko penned *I Awake* in the British seaside town of Brighton, it's perhaps not surprising *Eternal Return* sounds as upbeat as it does.

How, though, to write a record about love and happiness and not have it sound twee?

"I've definitely found that a challenge, but then I think that's why it's really important that you write these things when it rings true to you," she offers. "If you're happy and you write about being happy, it's hopefully going to sound less cheesy because it's genuine. I hope this is a genuinely happy record."

"I hope this is a genuinely happy record," says Blasko.

BOB DYLAN 1965-1966

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Damon Albarn

The Brit-pop star on Blur's big return, Nineties memories, David Cameron, Donald Trump and more

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

BLUR WERE ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR bands of the Nineties – everywhere except in America, where most mainstream listeners know them as the “woo-hoo!” guys thanks to their lone U.S. hit, 1997’s “Song 2”. In Australia, however, their reputation has never dimmed, as evidenced by the arena shows they played in the country in July. Now the band are hitting the road once again, where they’ll play their biggest American non-festival gigs ever, at L.A.’s Hollywood Bowl and New York’s Madison Square Garden. Frontman Damon Albarn called from his London home to talk about why he both loves and hates getting back together with his old bandmates; his plans for a new album with his most successful non-Blur project, Gorillaz; and more. “I’m on my sofa, and I’ve just put dinner on for my family,” he says. “Hopefully, it will cook while we’re talking, and my multi-tasking genius will transcend this Tuesday evening.”

2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the Battle of Brit Pop, when Blur and Oasis were archrivals. Do you think all that competition was good for the music?

It was definitely a lot of fun. We used the ghost of the Sixties to cover the skeleton of the modern age. It was a strange morphing, an interesting prototype time. A lot of the music from then has got a real atmosphere to it. Lyrically, I don’t think people write stuff like that anymore.

You and Noel Gallagher have squashed the beef, right? Do you hang out much?

Yeah, occasionally. I always enjoy his company. He’s hilarious.

Do you listen to much new pop music? What’s the last great record you heard?

I love [French-Cuban R&B duo] Ibeyi. I like lots of stuff, but I can’t think of the names.

OK. Just to throw a name out there – what do you think of Kanye West?

I think he’s pretty unique.

How about Taylor Swift?

Remarkable, but not unique. Anyone else?

We can keep going.

Drake?

He’s not as consistent as he could be.

Future?

Really interesting, and sometimes exhilarating. Your *Alice in Wonderland* musical, *Wonder.land*, is opening in London soon. What drew you to that material?

Alice in Wonderland terrified me as a kid. I was very disturbed by the Duchess in particular. She figured in my nightmares. The musical is more about identity: It’s very easy to have multiple identities, to be sort of passively schizophrenic all the time, because of social media.

Are you looking forward to playing Madison Square Garden with Blur?

Is anyone going to come see it? I wonder. Will anyone bother?

I’m going.

Well, that’s one person, and I know a couple of other people who are coming too. So we’re looking at three, at least. But, yes, I’m excited. It’s something we dreamed about back in the early days – you’d hear of someone playing there and think, “Christ, that’d be something!” But we never did it.

Do you enjoy playing with Blur now?

I still try to avoid it like the plague, to be honest with you. But something weird happens once I’ve stepped onstage: I just have the best time. And then as soon as we get off, I say, “Never again.” It’s very strange.

How come you try to avoid it?

I don’t know. I sort of forget sometimes that I did all that work, all those years ago. But then we have such a fine time onstage – it has a very emotional undercurrent, but it’s also fun and silly and noisy. That’s a fantastic recipe, to have all of those elements colliding into each other.

What else are you working on now?

I’m in the very early days on a new Gorillaz record. So far, it’s really fast, and it’s got quite a lot of energy. I’ve been stuck on piano, somewhere off Broadway, for years now. I want to go somewhere completely opposite of that.

What do you do with your leisure time if you’re not making music?

If there’s a football game on, I’ll go to that. Or I’ll just go into the countryside and sit by the sea and cook and walk and do yoga and eat porridge. This week I’m going down to [Banksy’s Disneyland parody installation] Dismaland to meet some people there.

Are you friends with Banksy?

Yeah, I’ve known him since about the year 2000. A long time.

What do you make of the tabloid story that alleges British Prime Minister David Cameron performed a sex act on a dead pig when he was in college?

I wouldn’t trust those politicians. But he’s cooler now that he’s admitted he smoked a bit of dope than he was before – that hasn’t done him any harm, has it?

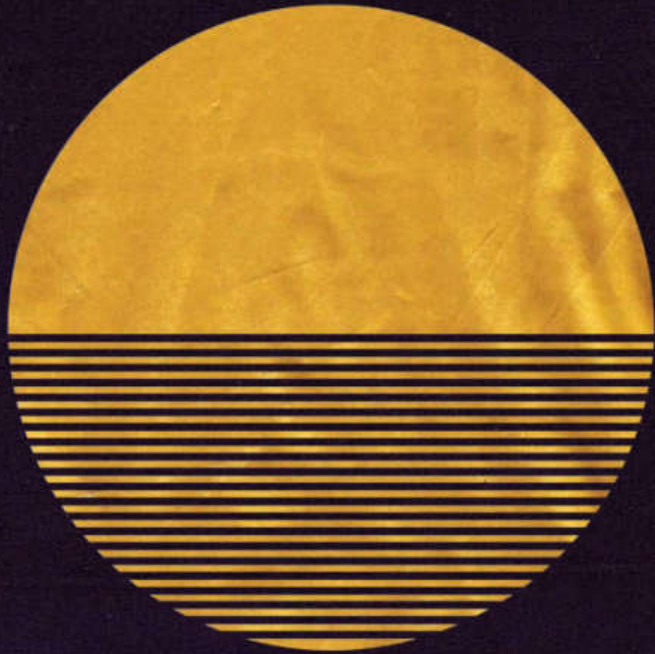
What about American politics? Any thoughts on Donald Trump?

Hmm. Maybe we could get him to do “Parklife” with us!



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Patti Smith's Dream



Anything's allowed: Smith

The follow-up to the punk poet's acclaimed 2010 memoir is a wild, experimental ride

PATTI SMITH BEGAN her career writing poetry books (*Seventh Heaven*) and for rock magazines (including this one), and her songs have always been steeped in literary tradition. So it's no surprise that the successor to her National Book Award-winning memoir is, once again, no boilerplate rock-star flashback. But where *Just Kids* follows a line through Smith's coming of age with late soulmate Robert Mapplethorpe, *M Train* is an impressionistic weave of dreams, disasters, space-outs and epiphanies, a meditation on life and art by a woman who sees them as one.

As on *Horses* ("Jesus died for somebody's sins, but not mine"), Smith slings a great lead. "It's not so easy writing about nothing," she begins here. In fact, she processes everything from outlandish en-



counters (a wee-hour singalong with chess master Bobby Fischer) to cleaning up cat puke to murder fantasies. For the follow-up to a surprise bestseller, *M Train* is also bravely experimental. Amid a travelling writer's solitude and memories of her late husband, former MC5 guitarist Fred Smith, are hallucinated conversations (with a TV remote and Nikola Tesla, among others) plus jump-cuts into literature (Haruki Murakami, Roberto Bolaño) and TV (*The Killing*). Unfortunately, few of Smith's reflections involve music, and the book meanders at times. But her caffeinated flow has its charms, and the beauty of her writing – "the pink sky was veined in lightning" – breaks through to buoy the dull spots.

Near the end of *Just Kids*, Smith railed, "Why can't I write something that would awake the dead?" With *M Train* – titled for a vision Smith had near Frida Kahlo's birthplace – she has. She is a generation's great medium, freestyling séances over diner coffee, across years of magical thinking.

WILL HERMES

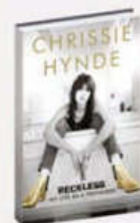
RELIVING THE GENIUS AND THE TRAGEDY OF THE KING OF POP

Most Michael Jackson books either try to understand his pop brilliance or dive into his tragic life. Veteran journalist (and ROLLING STONE contributing editor) Steve Knopper balances the musical and the personal, packing the 400 pages of *The Genius of Michael Jackson* with fascinating anecdotes, covering every stage of the singer's career in vivid detail – from pre-adolescent stardom to unprecedented crossover success with *Thriller* and *Bad* to his tortured, embattled final years. The section on Jackson's childhood is especially gripping; one heartbreaking story describes an early Jackson 5 recording session where Michael's tyrannical father, Joe, is so abusive that a producer pulls a gun on him and tells him not to come back while they're working. Later, we relive the all-too-familiar consequences of that turmoil as Jackson's life spins out of control. But this isn't a salacious tell-all; as its title implies, it's an authoritative account of a world-changing force of nature who once described his creative process as "standing under a tree and letting a leaf fall and trying to catch it – it's that beautiful."

JON DOLAN

CHRISSIE HYNDE, NO PRETENDER

The subtitle of Chrissie Hynde's new memoir, *Reckless*, may be "My Life as a Pretender", but by the time she gets to the formation of her pivotal New Wave band, the book is about 75 per cent done. It turns out that's not a problem, because somehow the daughter of a secretary and a phone-company man from Akron,



Ohio, found herself at an absurd number of key cultural moments in the 1960s and 1970s – from the Kent State shootings to Ziggy Stardust's first American concert (she gave David Bowie a ride in her mum's car that night) to the London punk scene, where she fronted an early version of the Clash. Hynde writes with complete frankness. A passage where she recounts being gang-raped by a group of bikers has already caused controversy. "You can't fuck around with people, especially people who wear 'I Heart Rape' and 'On Your Knees' badges," she writes.

ANDY GREENE



**SIX THINGS
WE LEARNED
READING THE ...**

Foo Fighters Biography

British journalist Mick Wall has penned books about AC/DC, Guns N' Roses, Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden and Pearl Jam. Now, with *Learning to Fly*, he turns his attention to the Foo Fighters, charting the band's rise – or, more accurately, Dave Grohl's journey from punk rock everyman to stadium rock hero. "There is only one real Foo Fighter," Wall attests, "and his name is Dave Grohl."

SIMON JONES

Grohl could have ended up in the brass section

Music was in Dave Grohl's blood – sort of. His father played the flute, his mother briefly sung in acapella groups. Young Dave's first instrument was a trombone. "But he just felt ridiculous," writes Wall. "You couldn't join a high school rock band playing the fucking trombone, man."

Beating Michael Jackson was an anti-climax

In January 1992, Grohl's pre-Foos band Nirvana knocked Michael Jackson off the top of the charts with their *Nevermind* album. The Seattle trio didn't know how to react. "They weren't gonna be jumping up and down, and going like, 'Yeah!'" recalls the band's then-publicist Anton Brookes. "It was such an anti-climax . . . Nobody seemed to be taking much notice of it."

It's lucky anyone heard Grohl's songs

"I always tried to keep them sort of a secret," Grohl says of his early demos. "I wouldn't give people tapes. I always freaked out about that. I have the stupidest voice. I was totally embarrassed and scared that anyone would hear them. I just wanted to see how poppy or how noisy a song I could write. It was always just for fun."

Franz Stahl is still sore

When Pat Smear left the Foo Fighters in 1997, his replacement was Grohl's former Scream bandmate, Franz Stahl. In 1999 Stahl was informed his services were no longer required when the band contacted him via a conference call. "There's never been any sort of closure on any of it," he tells Wall. "And we're going on twenty years now."

Them Crooked Vultures' album almost killed Grohl

Not quite, but he did end up in hospital in the midst of recording it, while also tending to new Foos material and being kept awake most nights by his then-newborn daughter, Harper. The Foos leader was rushed to ER when chest pains were mistaken for a heart attack. The doctors did tests and, he says, "finally turned around and told me that I needed to stop drinking so much coffee!"

Foos almost re-recorded their debut album

Grohl briefly toyed with the idea of getting the band to re-record their 1995 debut to mark their 20th anniversary. Drummer Taylor Hawkins wasn't a fan of the idea. "Are you out of your fucking mind?" Wall quotes him as saying. "That's the worst idea! People would fucking hate it!"

FANDOM

FOR THE LOVE OF SOUNDGARDEN

Since Soundgarden reunited in 2010, Mike and Jaye English – creators and publishers of a book dedicated to the Seattle rockers, *Photofantasm* – have followed their tours through five countries, taking literally thousands of photos along the way. A few years ago they decided to put their photos and experiences into a book, to which they asked fans from around the world to also contribute. "An authentic fan based book like *Photofantasm* had never been done until now," says Jaye. "There are fan centric books put out by other high profile bands but none that are from hundreds of fans and artists collaborating around the world in celebration of one band's music." Limited to 1,000 copies, and with all proceeds going to charity, the hard cover collector's edition features more than 1,000 photos of Soundgarden in action, more than 70 pages of artwork and gig posters, as well as interviews, facts, set-lists and reviews. "We wanted to honour Soundgarden's epic return by contributing a piece of documented history," says Jaye. Go to photofantasm.com for more details.



Fogerty Hasn't Forgotten

In a new memoir, the Creedence legend sounds off on one of rock's oldest feuds (and much more)

FOR CREEDENCE CLEARWATER Revival, the beginning of the end came during a group meeting in October 1970, when John Fogerty's bandmates dropped a bombshell on him: After nine Top 10 hits in three years – all written by Fogerty – they wanted Creedence to become a democracy, with everyone contributing equally to the songwriting. “They just wanted to go into the studio and come up with songs by osmosis,” Fogerty writes in his new memoir, *Fortunate Son: My Life, My Music*. “These guys had no clue about what was necessary. A vision. That's just the truth.... To me that was scary... a disaster.... Can I go so far as to say catastrophic?”



Creedence lasted just two more years, dissolving after the disastrous *Mardi Gras*, on which bassist Stu Cook and drummer Doug Clifford wrote songs for the first time. In *Fortunate Son*, Fogerty opens up like never before about the short and tumultuous life of the band – as well as his up-and-down solo career and personal struggles. It's a story that Fogerty, 70, has wanted to tell for years. “I always felt frustrated when I read articles about myself,” he says. “Sometimes I looked really bad. I'd see myself ranting or complaining or something. Finally, I just said, ‘I'm going to write a book.’” Eight years ago, Fogerty sat down in front of a video camera and spent countless hours telling his entire life story, which he later spun into the book.

Fortunate Son covers everything from Fogerty's pre-Creedence days in the Army Reserve to his battle with alcohol in the 1980s and 1990s, something he's rarely discussed. Fogerty stops short of calling himself an alcoholic, but his drinking got so bad that it almost cost him his relationship with his girlfriend, Julie (now his wife). “I can have a glass of wine with dinner now and be OK,” he says. “But I was psychologically addicted. I was doing everything that an alcoholic does.”

The biggest villain in the book is Saul Zaentz, the former label head who owned Creedence's copyrights. Zaentz sued Fogerty for plagiarism because he felt the



Fogerty “always felt frustrated” when he read articles about himself.

singer's 1984 hit “The Old Man Down the Road” was too similar to CCR's “Run Through the Jungle” – the only time an artist was ever sued for ripping himself off. (The suit was dismissed.) “He robbed us and owned all of our music,” Fogerty says.

Even after Creedence broke up, Fogerty still owed Zaentz his next 147 songs thanks to an unfortunate contract CCR had signed in their early days. “Music, my career – it all seemed to be in the rear-view mirror, with every avenue blocked off,” he writes. “And my gift was gone.”

By the late 1980s, the other members of Creedence – including Fogerty's brother, Tom – sold their shares in the band to Zaentz, which Fogerty compares to Judas betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Tom Fogerty died in 1990, his feud with his brother still unresolved. Today, Cook and Clifford play casinos and state fairs as Creedence Clearwater Revisited, with

a Fogerty sound-alike on vocals. “It sticks in my craw that they run around calling themselves Creedence,” Fogerty says. In other words, don't expect any sort of reunion tour. “I'm not going to seek that out,” he says. “They've been pretty poisonous to me, and in life itself, I'm pretty happy.”

Fogerty's last album, 2013's *Wrote a Song for Everyone*, was a stellar covers set, but he hasn't released an LP of original material since 2007's *Revival*. He hopes to remedy that soon. “Every day I practice guitar,” he says. “Lately, I've started to go,

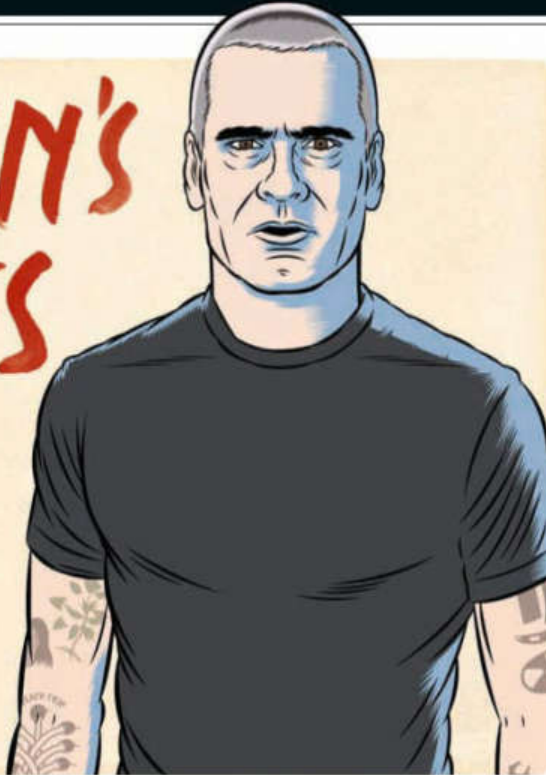
‘Wow, that could be a cool little lick. Maybe I should make a song out of that.’ I'm gearing up.” Another thing he hopes to do soon is finally watch *The Big Lebowski*, the 1998 stoner classic that introduced his music to a new generation of fans. “It's become this whole thing,” he says. “Someday I'll watch it. Right now, I've got kids. We watch a lot of *SpongeBob SquarePants*.” **ANDY GREENE**

“Saul Zaentz robbed us and owned all our music.”

A FAN'S NOTES

BY HENRY ROLLINS

Our man in the van despairs over the issue of gun control



IT IS DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT America without the topic of gun homicide coming up. You would figure after one case of multiple deaths perpetrated by a single shooter, that would be it. You would think that the shots that rang out would have been symbolically heard by all citizens and they would do whatever it took so no one would ever endure such a horrible end ever again. But what happens? Another mass shooting. And then another one and another one. In the brief pauses before the next ghastly headline scars the news, even more guns are purchased in America – a country with more guns than residents.

Sane and rational people all over the world look at America and wonder what it is about the place, a “first world” country where so many of their citizens seemingly are intent on murdering the other. If it is any consolation, there are a lot of Americans who ask the same questions.

America has a “gun thing”, which is inextricably woven into the very DNA of America’s brand of freedom. The document that brings the entire country together, The Constitution, has seven Articles and 27 Amendments. The first 10 are called The Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment states: “A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” There is no single sentence in the Con-

stitution more parsed or vehemently debated. For many, it’s the only part of the document that matters.

When one seeks to have a discussion on what could be done to make things “better”, like making it harder to obtain a gun, the National Rifle Association comes forward with evolved statements such as: “The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” They recommend that if the teachers were armed, there would be less casualties at the next school shooting. There is not a great deal of interest in making things safer, just a relentless quest to sell

“There is not a great deal of interest in making things safer.”

more guns to good guys to kill the bad guys, who no doubt can get guns because, well, they are bad guys.

America was birthed in revolution, slavery and genocide. From 1861 to 1865 the country attacked itself in a campaign of carnage called the Civil War. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865. Millions of Americans thought this was the beginning of the end. From then to now, every Civil Rights movement has largely failed. American freedom insures that you can get a gun easily. You have the freedom to be irresponsible with it.

These are the facts. So, what’s the problem? Millions of Americans are undereducated and over stimulated. They exist in an appallingly racist and proudly violent society. Predator one day, prey the next.

I don’t live in America. I survive it. ☹

Darlene Love

FIVE GREATEST FEMALE SINGERS

“These are the artists I listen to when I get up in the morning,” says Love, who’s got a great new LP out now, produced by Steve Van Zandt.

Barbra Streisand
“People”

Barbra’s voice is just so strong and so pure. The sound that came out of her mouth amazed me when I first saw her. It was almost like it was coming from her toes – like it wasn’t real.

Dionne Warwick
“Don’t Make Me Over”

I love her so much. I worked for Dionne as a backup singer for 10 years, and I drew a lot of strength from her.

Aretha Franklin
“Ain’t No Way”

Aretha and I are kindred spirits. I love all of her songs, especially this one. It really moves you and touches your heart.

Celine Dion
“All by Myself”

Celine Dion came out of the blue for me. When I found out she was from Canada, I said, “I guess Canada has some great things to offer!”

Carole King
“You’ve Got a Friend”

It’s almost impossible to pick one favourite song by Carole King, but this one sticks out for me. It tells you she’s about humanity.



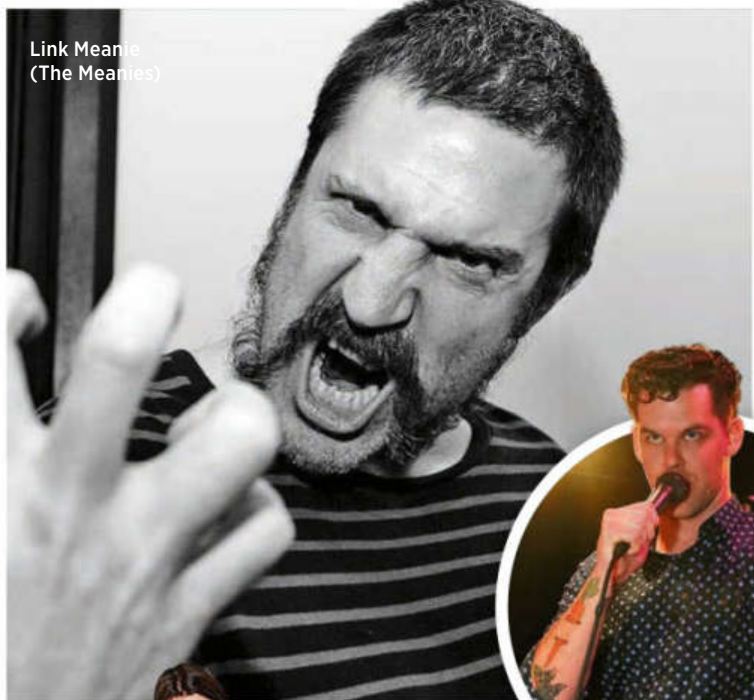


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Living Large in the Lodge

The Rolling Stone Live Lodge returned to Sydney in September and October. Our hearing may never be the same . . .



Link Meane
(The Meanies)



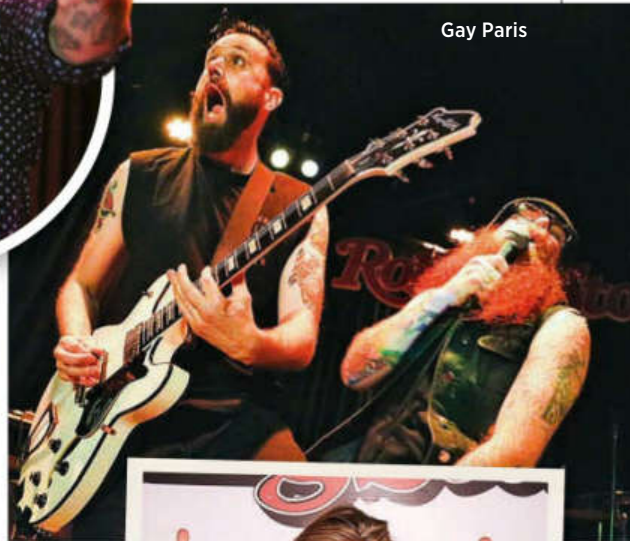
Abbe May



Trials



The
Snowdroppers



Gay Paris



Ayla



High-tails



Airling

WHEN JOSH PYKE STEPPED onstage at the Rolling Stone Live Lodge on the evening of Tuesday October 6th, he did so armed not with a guitar, but with 60 of the most challenging trivia questions he could muster. Watching the singer-songwriter host a trivia night was one of the more surreal moments of this year's Live Lodge, which was held at Sydney's Newtown Social Club from September 23rd to October 11th. Kicking off with a raucous opening night party that saw Jack Colwell and JONES Jnr. provide the soundtrack and Boy & Bear DJ and make cocktails,

from there punters were treated to a three-week smorgasbord of live music that included album launches by the likes of Gay Paris, Ash Grunwald and the Snowdroppers, label showcases (Inertia Music and Bad Apples), #JDFutureLegends nights starring Lurch & Chief, Asta and more, as well as stunning sets from all involved, be they up-and-comers like Nussy and Airling or established champs like Abbe May and the Meanies.

ROD YATES

Photography by Rod Hunt, Bella Ann Townes, Tim Levy, James Adams and Joshua Morris



Lanks



Creo



Stonefield



Home of the Live Lodge, the Newtown Social Club



Lurch & Chief



Polish Club



Uppercut Deluxe groomed punters at the opening party



Briggs and Lindsay McDougall



Josh Pyke hosting the Live Lodge trivia night



The Pinheads



Nooky



Food Court



Asta



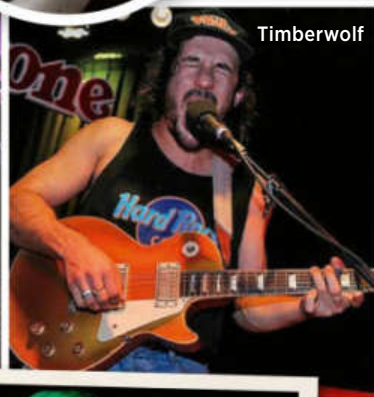
Big White



The Garden



We Lost The Sea



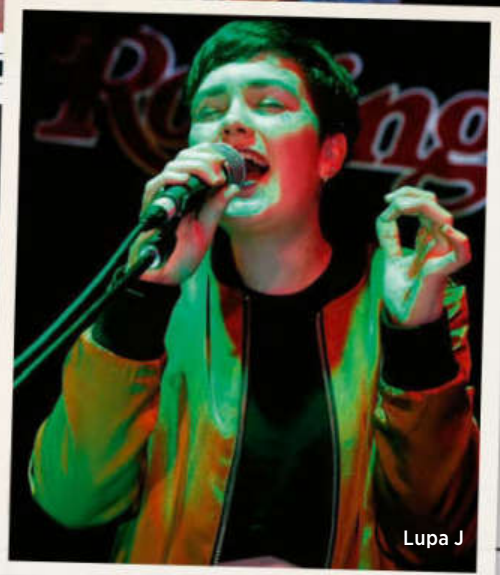
Timberwolf



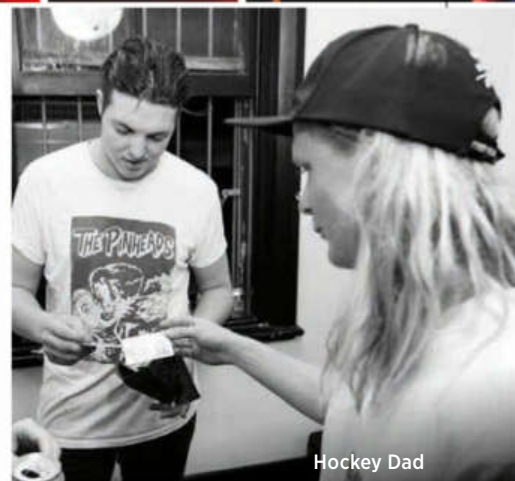
White Dog



Yes I'm Leaving



Lupa J



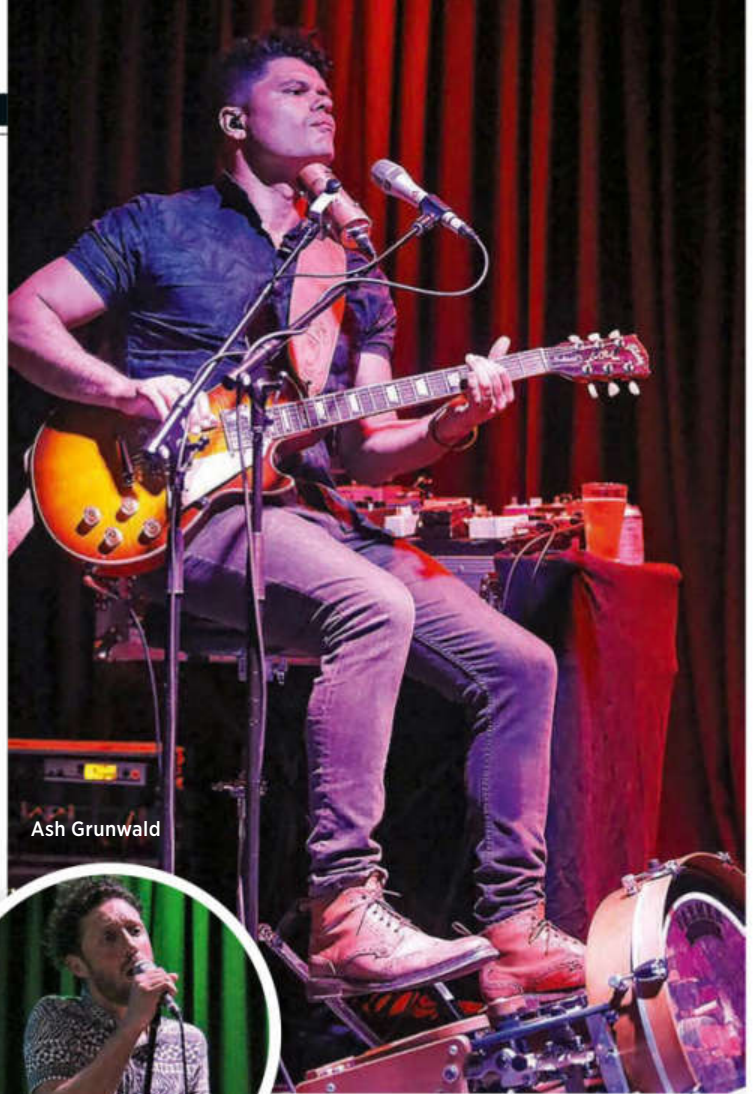
Hockey Dad



Jaakko Eino Kalevi
with Sydney's
Rainbow Chan on sax



Birdz



Ash Grunwald



Step-Panther



JONES Jr.



Boo Seeka and
(below right) Jannah
and Billy Fox



A.B. Original



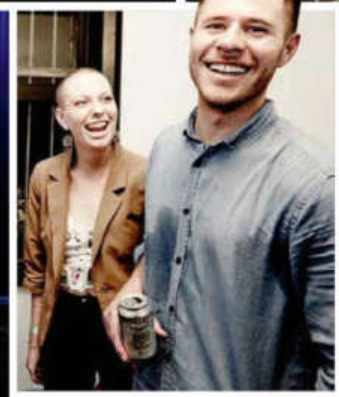
Olympia



Boy & Bear



Anna O





Jack Colwell and Ella Hooper



Phantastic Furniture



Philly



Sophie Lowe



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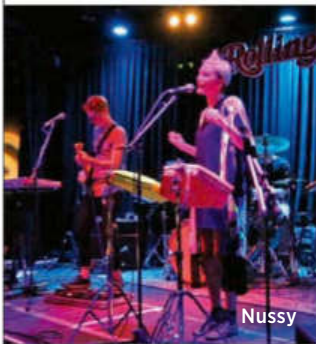
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Rod Stewart Still Has All the Luck

Flying along with a legend as he navigates Las Vegas, eight kids and a few old wounds

By Andy Greene

IT'S 42 DEGREES IN LAS VEGAS AS Rod Stewart's private jet lands at McCarran Airport, three hours before his show at Caesars Palace. After taking off from an airfield near his home in Beverly Hills, Stewart spent the 45-minute flight nibbling tea sandwiches, inhaling steam from a dehumidifier to preserve his voice and fidgeting in the strangely overheated cabin.

"Can we get off this hot plane?" he says to the flight attendant. "We were flying at 30,000 feet, where it must be freezing cold. Why is the plane so hot?" His irritation grows when he learns the limo driver who's supposed to take him to the casino is lost. Stewart, dressed in a blue gingham suit, walks into the cockpit to ask about the heat, but the pilot barely gets three words in before Stewart's 28-year-old daughter, Ruby,

pulls her dad down the stairs. Stewart immediately forgets the inconvenience, changing the subject, as he so often does, to soccer. What seems like the early stages of a meltdown turns out to be just a brief detour from Stewart's usual happy-go-lucky demeanor — the easy charm of a natural-born crowd-pleaser for whom life has been very good for a very long time.

In the five decades since he was discovered playing harmonica in a train station outside London, he has racked up 31 U.S. Top 40 hits, dated a parade of blonde models, fathered eight kids (with five women), and earned an estimated \$235 million. Tonight's show at Caesars Pal- [Cont. on 34]

'LIFE IS GOOD'
Stewart at his L.A. home. He recorded his new album in the library.

ROD STEWART

[Cont. from 33] ace will pull in \$450,000, and it's the 111th one he's done in the past three years.

Stewart's voice was recently back in the Hot 100 in America for the first time in more than a decade, thanks to A\$AP Rocky's "Everyday", which generously sampled "In a Broken Dream", an obscure 1968 song Stewart sang with the Australian rock band Python Lee Jackson. In July, Stewart and Rocky sang "Everyday" with CBS late-night host James Corden in a hilarious sketch that's been viewed on YouTube nearly 8 million times.

More significantly, Stewart recently started writing songs again for the first time in two decades. "I've always tortured myself and thought, 'You're a pretend songwriter. You're a performer,'" he says. But working on his 2012 memoir, *Rod: The Autobiography*, unlocked something in his brain, and soon he had enough new songs to fill out both 2013's *Time* and his latest album, *Another Country*, released last month.

His old gift came back partly out of necessity. "I'd done the Great American Songbook albums," he says. "I'd done a soul album. I'd done a rock [covers] album. I backed myself into an alley because there's not much left to do except write." He recorded *Another Country* in the library of his estate. "It just cost \$130,000," he says proudly. "In the old days, that was a week in the studio."

Like some of his classic early solo work, *Another Country* has a Gaelic flavour, heavy on violin and mandolin. Some songs, like "Batman Superman Spider-Man", were inspired by his young sons, nine-year-old Alastair and four-year-old Aiden, his two children with Penny Lancaster, a former model and Stewart's wife of eight years. "I'd put Aiden to bed, and he'd say, 'Give me a make-up story,'" says Stewart. "I'd say, 'What do you want it to be about?' He'd go, 'Batman Superman Spider-Man.'"

The limo finally arrives and whisks Stewart to Caesars Palace. Unlike other stars with Vegas residencies – Mariah Carey or Britney Spears, say – Stewart likes to change his set list for every show. Tonight, he's bringing back his 1991 hit "The Motown Song". He sits on a stool and watches his band play it straight through, offering detailed notes to nearly every member. He'd normally retreat to his dressing room (where he often leaves goofy notes on the ceiling for his old friend Elton, who uses the same theatre) until

showtime, but a Brazilian TV crew is in town to interview Stewart about his upcoming Rock in Rio performance.

The producers assure Stewart the interviewer is a pro, but it's soon clear that her command of English is lacking. She doesn't seem to get that his repeated pledge to "take me trousers off" at Rock in Rio is a joke. The next 10 minutes are a train wreck of awkward questions and flippant answers. At one point, Stewart keels over and pretends to croak.

Everyone in Stewart's orbit seems concerned, but once again he rebounds in seconds and begins happily signing a bunch of soccer balls he plans to kick into the audience during "Stay With Me". He's been

sionate presence in music, he has become a bilious self-parody – and sells more records than ever."

After the show, Stewart makes his way across the casino floor to a post-show party at Gordon Ramsay's Pub and Grill, where he eats shepherd's pie, drinks wine and chats with a bunch of buddies who played with him on his over-50 soccer team. After an hour, Stewart heads back to the airport so he can get back home and prep for an upcoming trip to Maui with Lancaster, two nannies and seven of his eight kids. Stewart met Lancaster in 1999, after ex-wife Rachel Hunter walked out on Stewart, leaving him devastated. Not long after, Stewart became a father twice more.

"Having kids at my age was the last thing on my mind," he says. "But when you get married, women generally want babies. We're madly in love. Life is good."

Two of Stewart's other children – 35-year-old Sean and Paris Hilton's old pal Kimberly Stewart – live in a guesthouse on the grounds of Stewart's estate. E! gave them their own reality show, which follows their misadventures all over Los Angeles. Stewart had a cameo in the pilot, but that was the extent of his involvement.

"They're enjoying themselves, and that's what counts," he says diplomatically. "But I'm cringing sometimes."

Stewart, who recently played a reunion gig with the Faces and is scheduling more Vegas shows for early next year, says he has no plans to retire. But he recently made one concession to age, quitting soccer after tearing a meniscus in his knee. It was a tough blow for a guy who's such a soccer fanatic that he built a regulation field in the backyard of his home in England so that his favourite team – Glasgow Celtic F.C. – could practice when they were in town. "I miss it desperately," he says. "For 13 years, I had doctors telling me I had to stop playing football. I did it until it became absolute misery."

Slowing down, even a little, isn't easy for Stewart. Chatting on the phone from L.A. one recent morning, he recaps his just-finished workout: a 30-minute uphill bike ride followed by dozens of gruelling laps in his pool, during which he swam underwater to help control his breathing onstage, a trick he learned from Frank Sinatra. "I thought afterward I'd just have a nice little sit in the sun," he says. "Then Alastair came down with his Celtic soccer ball and said, 'Come on, Dad. Let's go in the pitch!' I said, 'Oh, fuck, OK. Go and get me cleats, son. I'll be right there.'"



PEACOCKING

Celebrating his 100th show at Caesars Palace, in February. He earns \$450,000 per Vegas gig.

doing this for years and refuses to stop, even though he has been sued more than once by fans who have claimed they were smacked in the face.

At exactly 7:30 p.m., Stewart sprints onstage. The show is pure Rod – a mix of glorious hard rock, peacocking spectacle and heartfelt cheese. Ruby comes out midway through to sing a song with her group, the Sisterhood, before duetting with her father on "Forever Young". The set wraps with "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?" during which Stewart projects his 1977 ROLLING STONE cover onto a screen along with a quote: "I don't want to be singing 'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?' at age 50 and be a parody of myself."

Stewart's ability to make fun of his past is one of his many endearing qualities, but that doesn't mean he's forgotten the critical lashing he's taken at various points in his career – particularly during his disco period. He's even able to recite a devastating paragraph from ROLLING STONE'S 1980 *Illustrated History of Rock & Roll* nearly verbatim: "Rarely has a singer had as full and unique a talent as Rod Stewart; rarely has anyone betrayed his talent so completely. Once the most compas-

FIVE NOTES

Raury

THE 19-YEAR-OLD PRODIGY AIMING TO BRING LIKEMINDED SOULS TOGETHER

1 ALL IS BUT A DREAM

Teenager Raury Tullis just dropped *All We Need*, his major label follow-up to last year's *Indigo Child* EP, and the Georgia native is still pinching himself. "I still can't believe it," he beams. "I just saw my album cover on a billboard in Atlanta. It keeps hitting me that music is gonna be the reason that I get to take care of my family. I'm really grateful."

2 HIS TV DEBUT MADE HIM TWITCHY

Raury made his U.S. network TV debut in September on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. "I've performed for 20,000 people, I've performed in front of Pharrell – I have never been more nervous to do that show because it's one song on live TV. But it was amazing."

3 FOLK MEETS FUTURE

All We Need, recorded with producers like Danger Mouse, Jacknife Lee and Malay, genre blends. "One thing I didn't want to do was 'this is the rock song, this is the folk song, this is the hip-hop song,'" Raury explains. "As different as each song is, I felt like the connecting thread really had to be my perspective. I would say it's a marriage between folk and future."

4 HE HEARTS THE NINETIES

Raury's love of Nineties music led to guests like the RZA and Tom Morello. "I thought about the energy that Tom could bring from being in Rage Against the Machine, who were about revolution. I want my generation to know about them [RATM], because a lot of people don't."

5 ALL WE NEED IS UNITY

Preaching positivity and coming from a spiritual perspective, Raury sees his music as a chance for like-minded souls to come together. "I meet so many people who see things differently, and I want them to know they're not alone, and through my music they'll be able to find each other."

JAMES JENNINGS



Rock's Undead Supergroup

Four famous musicians, one A-list actor and a fierce version of 'Brown Sugar': An afternoon with the world's coolest cover band

THERE'S A BREAK IN REHEARSALS for the Hollywood Vampires – a band made up, as singer Alice Cooper says, of men who've all had near-death experiences. The group recently released its self-titled debut, a blast of classic-rock karaoke featuring covers of “My Generation”, “Manic Depression” and an un-reinvented “Whole Lotta Love”, not to mention a “School’s Out”/“Another Brick in the Wall” medley. Now the band is in a Burbank warehouse, getting ready to play its first shows.

Cooper, looking gothic-casual in a black T-shirt and black jeans, gives his longtime manager Shep Gordon a big hug. Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry's dark-copper-coloured chest is covered in puka shells, and he's mumbling something about working as a janitor in a synagogue. Natural hair colour seems largely absent. Drummer Matt Sorum and bassist Duff McKagan – Guns 'N Roses' old rhythm section – are having a laugh as a dude in a bandana, baggy jeans and black boots listens respectfully. That would be Johnny Depp, the group's surprisingly adept second guitarist.

Things have been going well today, but now producer Bob Ezrin walks over and shakes his head. The Vampires' set runs 44 minutes, but they're supposed to play for an hour. Cooper suggests they pad out the set with “Brown Sugar”. Depp launches into an impeccable Keith Richards imitation, and the song reaches a joyous crescendo as Depp and Perry trade licks.

Ezrin applauds and tells the band to take a short break. Sorum talks to a hanger-on about how he used to keep it together during shows by sweating the booze out onstage. “When I was in GN'R with Slash and Duff and everyone, I gauged my alcoholism on their drinking,” Sorum says. “They drank all day. I always started at happy hour. I would kind of ease into the gig. So I'm like, I'm not an alcoholic.”

Depp and Cooper met on the set of Depp's 2012 film *Dark Shadows*. Hollywood Vampires started with the idea of recording a covers album, giving them an excuse to fool around in the actor's well-appointed studio (“He has the best guitar collection I've seen,” says Perry). The band took its name from a 1970s L.A. drinking collective that included Cooper, Keith Moon, Harry Nilsson and guest stars like John Lennon and Ringo Starr. Eventu-



FANGS OUT Perry, Depp and Cooper (above). Cooper first met Depp on the set of *Dark Shadows*.

ally, the new Hollywood Vampires cut an album, with a number of tracks paying tribute to rock greats who drank or drugged themselves to death – Moon, John Bonham, Jim Morrison – some of whom were friends of Cooper's. (Cooper himself quit drinking in the 1980s after his doctor told him he could either stop or join his friends in the hereafter.)

Recalling all those ghosts might've been a melancholy experience for Cooper, but he shrugs off that suggestion. “These are historical characters,” he says. “When you're talking about a John Lennon, that goes beyond being a guy you drank with and into Abraham Lincoln. You're over the sadness of it, and you're now going, ‘All right, if John were here, what would he do?’”

For his part, Depp acts like he's won the classic-rock Powerball. Music was always at the centre of his life. His first \$600 went toward a '56 Telecaster. The guitar was later stolen, but he played in bands long before he started acting. Cooper's *Welcome to My Nightmare* got him through some tough times. “I approach my work as an actor in the same way I play music,” says Depp. “There is this element of chance – grabbing some moment that you didn't

really plan on. Music is the fastest way to emotion.” He puffs on what he calls a “poison stick” and admits there's something nice about being in a band rather than being the sole focus of a project, like on a tent-pole film. Perry has to sometimes entice him to the front of the stage.

There have already been fantasy-camp moments. Depp's friend Paul McCartney stopped by the actor's studio, and they banged out “Come and Get It”, a 1969 song McCartney wrote for Badfinger. During the recording, Depp found himself staring at Perry with a “can you believe this shit?” look that Perry returned with a grin.

I ask them if, now that they're older, they were doing anything to protect their health as they get ready for a series of gigs that will include a festival in Rio. Perry says he's a closet health-food junkie. Cooper shoots me his ageless demonic grin. “Me? White Castle.”

It's time for more rehearsal, before Depp has to go catch a flight. At one point, the Vampires launch into “My Generation”. And for a second the world's most famous cover band makes one of the world's most covered songs sound almost young again.

STEPHEN RODRICK

COURTESY



TURNING
IT LOOSE
Rateliff

BREAKING

Nathaniel Rateliff's Soul Redemption

How a struggling Colorado singer-songwriter
found his inner Otis Redding

LAURA HARVEY

A FEW YEARS AGO, IT looked like Nathaniel Rateliff's music career might be over. The Missouri native had been at it for more than a decade, first as frontman of the Denver alt-rock band Born in the Flood, then as a singer-songwriter. His 2010 solo album led to gigs opening for Mumford & Sons, but his label rejected his follow-up. Rateliff worked as a gardener and thought about calling it quits. "I thought, 'If it ends here, then I've done what I can do,'" says Rateliff, 36.

He eventually decided he had only one option — "push through and write new songs" — but this time, he added a fresh twist. "At an early age, I loved Otis Redding, Sam Cooke and doowop," he says. "I wanted to make that music for such a long time, but I couldn't figure out how to do it without being cheesy." In 2013, Rateliff formed the seven-piece soul band Night Sweats with some Denver buddies, and they knocked out most of their self-titled debut in two inspired weeks (the album was recently released on legendary Memphis label Stax).

The response has been beyond anything Rateliff could have predicted. The album debuted in the U.S. Top 20, and the Night Sweats have quickly established themselves as one of rock's best new live acts. When they performed their high-powered hit "S.O.B." on *The Tonight Show*, they sent Jimmy Fallon into fanboy convulsions. "If you believe in soul... if you believe in rock n roll..." Fallon tweeted, "enjoy the band on our show tonight." "Nathaniel's always had a dynamic voice, but this is a great showcase for it," says his friend Ben Lovett of Mumford & Sons. "He just goes for it."

Rateliff, who looks like a cross between a barista and a backwoods preacher, has greeted the success with a mix of excitement and trepidation. "I'm still waiting for something bad to happen," he says. "For years, I've had people say, 'This is going to be real big.' So I'm not sure how to react to it."

Rateliff says his new sound has a lot in common with his earlier, more sombre work. "S.O.B." is, at heart, a troubled song about drinking your way through a breakup. "The connection would be self-loathing and writing about the relationships in my life," he says. Rateliff isn't ruling out a return to his unplugged side. That said, he knows why the Night Sweats are connecting in ways his other projects haven't: "It's a lot easier if the crowd is on its feet and clapping and putting their phones away." **DAVID BROWNE**



“

Ray Davies
made me
want to be a
songwriter.”

Ron Sexsmith

Inside the Canadian singer-songwriter is a long-haired, spandex-clad rocker screaming to get out **By Rod Yates**

The Song I Fell In Love To

Buddy Holly "True Love Ways", 1960



"When my wife and I got married, our first dance at the wedding was 'True Love Ways'. When we first started dating she played in a band called By Divine Right, and they were about to go on tour in Australia. Before she left I made her a cassette, and 'True Love Ways' was the first song on it. It means a lot to both of us."

The Song I Play Air Guitar To

Deep Purple "Fireball", 1971



"I'm a frustrated hard rock musician. My favourite Deep Purple album is *Fireball*, and for my money the title-track still rocks harder than anything I've ever heard. You can't help but play air guitar to it. I wish I could sing like [Purple frontman] Ian Gillan. Whenever I get a chance to do karaoke I'm always either doing a Deep Purple song or David Lee Roth. I love that kind of singing, but I just wasn't born with that kind of voice."

The Song That Makes Me Cry

Judee Sill "The Kiss", 1973



"I don't know what it is about this song but it's so moving. It's one of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard. I can't even listen to it sometimes, 'cause I just find it so devastating. It's like William Blake or something set to music. It's very poetic and very moving. [Hearing it for the first time] was one of those 'where have you been all my life?' moments. I've talked to other people about it and it's had a similar effect on them."

The Song I'm Most Proud Of

Ron Sexsmith "Heavenly", 2011



"I was in New Mexico with my wife and I got an e-mail asking me if I had any songs for this singer from Canada called Nikki Yanofsky, she's

sort of a jazz singer. At the time I think she was 16 or something. So I'm thinking, what can a 16-year-old girl sing about? It would have to be something kind of innocent. So I wrote the song, and it's a very pastoral kind of song about nature but also about love. I made a demo and sent it and they really liked it, but for some reason didn't do it. I was kind of glad 'cause then I got to do it. And that album [*Long Player Late Bloomer*] did very well for me. After having a few in a row that didn't do well it was nice to have one that connected."

The Song I Want To Cover

Lorde "Royals", 2013



"My niece is about eight or nine, and I was asking her what her favourite song was and she said 'Royals', and I'd never heard of it before. So I went and checked out the video. I find Lorde to be one of the more interesting of the current crop of pop acts. There's something almost Kate Bush-like about her. I love the melody, I love the simplicity of it."

The Song That's Guaranteed To Get Me on the Dancefloor

David Bowie "Golden Years", 1976



"I don't really dance in front of people unless I'm drunk, but the opening guitar riff is so funky. You can't resist it. I remember as soon as I heard the song 'Fame' on the radio I went to the record store to buy it on 45, but they were sold out of it. All they had was 'Golden Years', which I hadn't heard. I bought it, and came to love that song even more than 'Fame'. I remember seeing him do it on *Soul Train* and everyone was dancing, and I was at home dancing, watching on TV."

The Song That Cheers Me Up

The Kinks "Wonderboy", 1968



"From the very first time I heard it it was life changing. Before I heard the Kinks I was a fan of Elton John and the Beatles, but [frontman] Ray Davies was the first [artist] that made

me want to be a songwriter. I heard the Kinks on the radio driving around with my dad, and the very next day I went to the record store and bought *Golden Hour of the Kinks*. It had about 20 songs on it, but the first two were 'Days', which blew my mind, and 'Wonderboy'. I was hooked. The Kinks are still one of my biggest influences."

The First Song I Learned to Play

Elton John "Crocodile Rock", 1972



"I was a member of the Elton John fan club when I was nine or 10. At that point in time I just wanted to sing, I didn't expect I'd ever be a writer and I didn't know how to play any instruments. But when I was 14 or 15 I started playing with some friends, we had a garage band, and somebody showed me the chords to 'Crocodile Rock', and to know the chords to any song was just mind-blowing. That was the missing link for me. I think I just played it nonstop for a while 'cause it was cool to get through a whole song."

The Song I Want Played At My Funeral

Harry Nilsson "Think About Your Troubles", 1971



"It's beautiful the way it's written, 'cause it takes all your problems and reduces them to a single tear drop. He does it in this very beautiful and humorous way and it makes you feel better by the end of the song just by putting things in perspective. It's very comforting."

The Song I Wish I Wrote

Randy Newman "Marie", 1974



"The *Good Old Boys* record is a bit of a concept album, and this is one of the characters on the album that's singing. It was written for this character's wife, and he's full of regret about how he treated her. [Newman] says things in songs that not very many writers are brave enough to do."

Dave Grohl sees a Ghost, 2015

**Photographed by
John McMurtrie**

"This shot was taken in Oslo, Norway, on June 10th, and was one show before Dave Grohl's fateful tumble off the stage in Gothenburg, which well and truly brought him to his knees," recalls snapper John McMurtrie. "I had set up a studio backstage at the Telenor Arena where Ghost were supporting the Foo Fighters. This was the first time the new [Ghost vocalist] Papa Emeritus III had been photographed, and he was saying very little during the entire photo shoot. All of a sudden the door burst open and in bounces Dave Grohl, full of beans. Dave is always having a good day. I have shot him quite a few times over the years and he is always upbeat, and the mood in the room brightened. On this occasion I was categorically told by the Foo Fighters' management that Dave would not be posing for photographs with Ghost, so don't even dare ask!

"Hey Dave! Do you wanna get a picture with Papa Emeritus?" I ask.

"Hell yeah!" Grohl replies enthusiastically!

Dave bounded in and Papa began blessing him as I clicked away, chuckling to myself. Firstly because the scene before me was so bizarre, and secondly because this portrait "was never supposed to happen".

Shortly after Ghost took to the stage, and two days later Dave broke his leg, putting the Fooks' entire world tour in jeopardy. I'm not sure what blessing Papa Emeritus III performed, but it certainly didn't bring Dave any good luck!"





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THE FUTURE IS NOW

We profile 10 of the hottest artists who are climbing the charts, breaking the Internet or just dominating our office stereos . . .

SOPHIE LOWE

SOUNDS LIKE: Kate Bush time traveling to the year 3000 and returning with a spaceship full of synths and sexy, cinematic electro

FOR FANS OF: Banks, FKA twigs, AlunaGeorge, Purity Ring

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Arriving in Australia from the UK at the age of 10, Lowe discovered a passion for acting that led to an AFI nominated turn in 2009 drama *Beautiful Kate* and a recent role on supernatural TV series *The Returned*. The 25-year-old began writing songs at 15 with the aid of GarageBand, her debut EP of gothic electro-Americana arriving in 2013 under the moniker 'SOLO'. With the imminent release of a follow-up under her birth name, a move into live performance has now taken centre stage, including supports with Meg Mac and Montaigne.

SHE SAYS: "I've never done stage as an actress so performing live is a whole new thing for me. It's so weird just watching people watch you. But recently at a show in Melbourne I decided to stop thinking so much and just have fun with it. I guess there's still an element of performance when I'm on stage - I'm trying to pretend I'm really confident [laughs]. When I'm acting I'm hiding behind somebody else's vulnerabilities, but with my music it's just me out there - there's nowhere to hide."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Understand", an unholy lovechild of Gary Numan, Feist and FKA twigs. **JAMES JENNINGS**





CITY CALM DOWN

SOUNDS LIKE: Melancholy and the not-so-infinite-sadness; amidst swathes of cold synths are bursts of hope and melody.

FOR FANS OF: The National, Joy Division, Editors

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: When City Calm Down released their *Movements* EP in 2012, they generated a groundswell of buzz thanks to Triple J-approved tracks such as "Pleasure & Consequence" and "Sense of Self". And then . . . nothing. The quartet withdrew from the live scene and became consumed by the idea of writing songs on computers, forgetting how to be a band in the process. "We'd taken away the skill that we had as

a group of people," says keyboardist Sam Mullaly. "We're skilled at our instruments, not as computer operators." Adds frontman Jack Bourke, "We found the most obvious thing: as a band, we should play as a band." After months of false starts and aborted songs, the breakthrough came on a writing trip to Phillip Island in the middle of 2014, when the four-piece – which formed in Melbourne in 2008 – wrote three songs that would end up on their just-released debut album, *In a Restless House*. An album of sweeping melodies framed within an icy, synth-laden shell, it finds Bourke ruminating on the creeping responsibilities that face those heading into their late-twenties. "I think for our generation," he says, "understanding how to take on that responsibility is quite dif-

ferent, economically we're in a very different position to our parents. It's just trying to draw out the emotions of what a person might feel, looking at what's ahead. That's where the title came from – there's a structure around you but you don't really know what's going on with it."

THEY SAY: "I didn't think it would take us this long to make an album," says Mullaly. "The years just trickle away and you don't realise. You're kind of just working on it and that's a focus that's isolated from time, because it's so important. And then people say it's been seven years and you're like, 'It was?'"

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Album highlight "Son". A church organ ushers in Bourke's baritone, before building into one giant earworm of a chorus.

ROD YATES



WAAX

SOUNDS LIKE: A short, sharp, sonic kick to the face that will leave you humming their melodies while picking your teeth off the floor.

FOR FANS OF: Hole, Iggy Pop, Veruca Salt
WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Formed in Brisbane in 2012, Waax underwent myriad personnel changes before recently settling on their current line-up. In 2014 they picked up Triple J airplay for debut single "Wisdom Teeth", which led to shows with the Delta Riggs, Stonefield, UPSET and Guitarwolf. Their just-released debut EP, *Holy Sick*, encapsulates the band's knack for combining fuzzed-out punk riffing with Maria DeVita's wild-card vocals and an ear for hooks that stick. Live, DeVita is a force of nature.

THEY SAY: "A lot of the songs come from a place of anger, and I think that's very evident in the way we perform as well," says DeVita. "But then there's also a lot more of a vulnerable side to my writing. So there's these two different ideas, and the one common element between the two is probably hooks."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: *Holy Sick*'s dynamic and biting title-track – a future anthem in the making.

ROD YATES

GREEN BUZZARD

SOUNDS LIKE: Mid-Nineties Manchester transplanted to modern day Newtown via Lower East Side New York

FOR FANS OF: The Strokes, early Oasis, Tame Impala

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Green Buzzard may have only played their first show last July – "I brought two beers out onstage and knocked them over immediately," laughs bassist Huw Farrell. "I was a wreck!" – but by that point they'd already scored a record deal with tastemaker label I Oh You (DMA's, Violent Soho), to whom vocalist Paddy Harrowsmith sent a series of demos last year. Harrowsmith, Farrell and drummer James West had been writing songs together since 2013, with the frontman conceiving

the concept for the band prior to penning a single note of music. Taking their name loosely from the song "Buzzards of Green Hill" by Les Claypool's Fearless Flying Frog Brigade, their debut Double A-side single, "Zoo Fly"/"Slow It Down Now", has been praised by local and international media alike – *NME* declared them their "Buzz Band of the Week" in June, and *Q* magazine premiered "Slow It Down Now" on their website.

THEY SAY: "There was a definite idea behind [the band]," says Harrowsmith. "The name came



"There was a definite idea behind the band. The name came first."

first, and the image behind it, it was pretty pre-meditated. That's why we took so long putting the first [song] out, I want-

ed to take my time with it, get a band together and then have a bunch of songs ready."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: The melodic, psychedelic one-two punch of "Zoo Fly"/"Slow It Down Now". A new single, "Phantasy Girl", was also released in mid-October.

R.Y.

EMPRESS OF

SOUNDS LIKE: An immersive, emotional, trippy dance party

FOR FANS OF: Björk, Kimbra, Blood Orange

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Lorely Rodriguez, a.k.a. Empress Of, has solidified a reputation as an original electropop voice with her catchy, textured debut, *Me*. To make the LP, Rodriguez ditched New York City and lived in a friend's home in Mexico to write: "I just had to detach myself from regular life and just be so obsessed with writing it," she says. For the album, Rodriguez wrote, produced and

played every instrument, with the exception of her vocals, which were recorded at the legendary Electric Lady Studios.

"I wanted them to be really strong," she says. "I wanted someone to be there to pull performances out of me." The final product is as diverse as the music she grew up listening to – from Celia Cruz to Britney Spears to Björk.

SHE SAYS: "I really love how everyone is calling it a pop record. I don't really think of it as pop music but the fact that other people think of it as pop music makes me think that pop music can change into some-

thing that's a little more than the norm... I made a record that I would want to hear even if I didn't make it. I think that there's a lot in there to take from that record about how people forget to love themselves, put themselves first and put themselves as the most important. I think *Me* reminds you, the listener, that they are the most important person in their life. Whatever shit you're going through is secondary to you."

“

I made a record that I would want to hear.”

—

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Water Water" shimmers and throbs like post-dubstep Kate Bush.

BRITTANY SPANOS





ROMAN GIANARTHUR

SOUNDS LIKE: A secret late-night Radiohead jam at Paisley Park

FOR FANS OF: Miguel, D'Angelo, Janelle Monáe
WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Dig into the credits for Janelle Monáe's *The ArchAndroid* and *The Electric Lady*, and Roman GianArthur's imprint – a mix of influences ranging from Stevie Wonder to Ennio Morricone – reveals itself. A key member of Monáe's Warhol-esque Wondaland Arts Society, the formidable vocalist, producer, arranger and multi-instrumentalist dropped a swanky verse on Jidenna's viral "Classic Man" and helped sculpt this year's *Wondaland Presents: The Eephus EP*. Now GianArthur's sensitive rocker aura is finally front-and-centre on *OK Lady*, a six-song EP of Radiohead covers delivered through a D'Angelo filter. In 2012, GianArthur was learning the guitar via the video game *Rocksmith*, and the first song he mastered was "High and Dry". After a deep D'Angelo dis-

cussion with Wondaland bandmate Chuck Lightning, the idea to fuse the two artists' styles crystallised. His version of "High and Dry" is slowed down to a meditative crawl and pairs elegantly with patches of Voodoo's "Send It On".

HE SAYS: "Thom Yorke's falsetto, the way he sings, it has a soulful thing to it. It's a different kind of soul that I hadn't seen before – but I recognised it. The rhythm, man. You can hear it. You can listen to *The King of Limbs* and hear it really prominently. You can tell they understand something about how to move your body. It's not locked into the stereotypical rock pocket.

"The music I'm working on now is more like 'well' music. What water was D'Angelo drinking? What water was Radiohead drinking? What was Jimi Hendrix drinking? What water was James Brown drinking? The greatest artists, they pull from the same water. They don't just take from whoever was next in line. They go back to wherever the genesis was. That's what this is."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: Monáe jumps into the mix for a "No Surprises" duet. REED FISCHER

ELLE KING

SOUNDS LIKE: If Wanda Jackson had been born in 1989, sandpaper growl and brazen lyrical sensibilities fiercely intact

FOR FANS OF: Nikki Lane, ZZ Ward, Valerie June

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: She's the third woman to have a single reach Number One on the U.S. Alternative charts (following in the footsteps of Lorde and Tracy Bonham). The video for "Ex's & Oh's" – from her February debut *Love Stuff* – has racked up over five million views, she's cracked the U.S. Top 40 and her badass rockabilly antics made a fan out of Reese Witherspoon, who asked King to contribute a couple songs to the *Hot Pursuit* soundtrack. Producers Jeff Bhasker, Mark Ronson and Patrick Carney have all worked to harness her irresistible charm.

SHE SAYS: "I started with the guitar around 12 but didn't learn the banjo until I was about 18 or 19. Like most things in life, it started with a cute boy. He was playing a banjo, and I obsessed over it and taught my-



self how to play." Though full of Southern spit, King spent her early days performing at open mic nights around Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "I learned that you could get free beer, even if you're underage, if you're playing a show. So I started playing shows as often as I possibly could. I was 15!"

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Cracks" addresses a sense of perpetual disquiet, but the emphasis here shifts away from guitars and towards an ominous synthesised earworm.

MARIELLE ANAS

JOY.

SOUNDS LIKE: The zeitgeist. Steamy Aussie R&B, with an ethereal vibe and ridiculously on-trend beats

FOR FANS OF: Banks, the Kite String Tangle, and other multi-tasking millennials. She's as comfortable covering Drake as she is Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams".

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Eighteen-year-old Olivia McCarthy first caught our attention with "Captured", a track she put together for a school assignment and uploaded to Triple J Unearthed in 2014. It's since amassed more than 135,000 plays

on Soundcloud. "I was actually going to uni to study medicine," says the Brisbane-born McCarthy, whose performance at this year's Bigsound was one of the most talked about of the conference. "But I deferred and decided to do music at the last minute, which was scary for my parents." Taking the moniker JOY. (her middle name), McCarthy has released two EPs, *Stone* and *Ode*, but she's also making her name as a producer, cooking up beats for Eminem collaborator M-Phazes, Nicole Millar and New Zealand singer Ruby Frost. She's since relocated to Sydney, putting to-

gether a live band featuring members of the recently defunct Papa vs Pretty.

SHE SAYS: "I really fucking love hip-hop. I feel like all I ever listen to is hip-hop... I'm not sure if I want to go down the hip-hop track myself, but maybe [I'll] get a bit more R&B at some stage. I'd love to do like six EPs with different vibes. But I love making hip-hop beats for other people. It's really fun working with rappers."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "About Us" from her recently released *Ode* EP shows off her prodigious talents as both a singer and a producer.

DARREN LEVIN

"I was going to uni to study medicine but I deferred and decided to do music at the last minute."



CAR SEAT HEADREST

SOUNDS LIKE: Lo-fi teenage symphonies to the great unknown, with catchy hooks and strikingly personal lyrics

FOR FANS OF: Leonard Cohen lyrics, Beach Boys harmonies, Guided by Voices production

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Twenty-three-year-old Virginia native Will Toledo wrote most of the songs on the stunning *Teens of Style* in college, recording in his dorm whenever his roommates were

out and uploading the results to Bandcamp. "It was just sort of explosions in the dark," he says. "I was always hoping that the stars would align and I would get on board with a label, but nothing really connected." That changed as his music slowly gained a diehard cult of young, web-savvy fans. This year, Matador Records took note: Toledo signed to the indie powerhouse, put together a new band and re-recorded his best songs for *Teens of Style*, released in Australia last month. Plus he's already got enough material banked for a second album, *Teens of Denial*, due in 2016.

HE SAYS: "Times To Die", a sweeping meditation on religion and the meaning of life, developed from an early fragment titled "Fuck Merge Records", which Toledo wrote after he tried and failed to submit his music to the North Carolina label at age 19. "The chorus was 'No unsolicited demos, no unsolicited demos,'" Toledo says with a sheepish grin. "Obviously I have a greater appreciation of why that's a policy now,

Toledo's early recordings were "explosions in the dark".

but I was just a kid at the time, and I wanted a place to send my demos."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Something Soon" turns family drama into pulse-racing bedroom pop.

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON





MATHAS

SOUNDS LIKE: Distilled Midnight Oil, frozen in carbonite and revived as a synth-loving slam poet

FOR FANS OF: The Herd, TZU, Omar Musa
WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: A powerful live performer, Perth MC Mathas (AKA Tom Mathieson) is also a renaissance artist who works in a variety of mediums. He didn't just write the lyrically dense missives on second album *Armwrestling Atlas*, he also produced and mixed them, and painted the LP's artwork. Six years on from his debut full-length, each of the 13 tracks has been polished through years of live performance and his deliberate, often stento-

rian flow is cut with almost gentle crooning and the occasional guest spot. There's a distance to the sound at times, as if the perspective Mathieson writes from is off-planet, and there's a sci-fi sensibility to many of the layered synth-driven melodies. For all that, *Armwrestling Atlas* retains a red-dust West Australian style of storytelling and poses questions that are firmly rooted in the soil of Australian society. "Nourishment" is the song that perhaps embodies it best, exploring the chasm that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia through our relationship to food and native ingredients. "I do not know a single recipe, do not know an Elder to ask,"

Mathas laments on the track, distilling in a line the sense of loneliness and disconnection that is shot through the set.

HE SAYS: "I'm not in a rush to make people party, if you know what I mean? I think there are other people who do that really freakin' well and I'm not really sure if it's actually my place. Hopefully the album reflects a relatively dark undertone running all the way through it, with a little bit of optimism floating in the background. I'm proud of it as a body of work."

HEAR FOR YOURSELF: "Nourishment" featuring Abbe May is a great place to start, but "Free Shit" and "Stone Cold Sober" are also essential listening.

DANIEL FINDLAY

"I'm not in a rush to make people party, if you know what I mean."

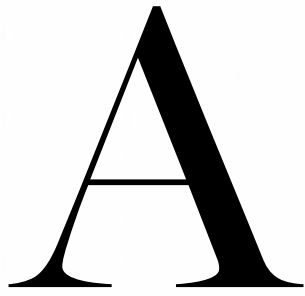
A Man OF THE People

On the road with the world's
biggest male pop star, Ed Sheeran

By Paul Brannigan

LIT UP
Sheeran
onstage at
Wembley
last July.





AS THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK ON HIS dressing room wall ticked towards 11 p.m. on the night of July 12th, Ed Sheeran sat in solitude and silence, the excitable babble of friends and family outside the door drowned out by the persistent hum of an overly-aggressive air-conditioning unit.

Minutes earlier, he had stood onstage at Wembley Stadium, courteously accepting the applause and raucous cheers proffered by 87,000 ticket-holders on the third of his three sold-out shows at England's largest and most prestigious venue. Now, as he decompressed, the

Yorkshire-born singer/songwriter was struck by the disorienting thought that at the age of 24 he'd reached a point which would be considered a pinnacle in the career of the world's most iconic musical artists.

As ostentatious as Wembley's claim to be 'The Venue of Legends' may be, such grandstanding is not without foundation. It was on this site, if not in this actual stadium – the original grand old lady of European sporting stadia being demolished in 2002, replaced, in 2007, by the current state-of-the-art facility – that the first post-World War II Olympics were held in 1948; that England won soccer's World Cup in 1966; and that the UK leg of the Live Aid spectacular took place in 1985. In the ensuing 30 years the likes of Madonna, Queen, U2 and Michael Jackson (whose seven-night residency on the 1988 *Bad* tour set a record for the old Wembley) have copper-fastened their global megastar status with multiple nights at the national stadium. It's a measure of Wembley's rarefied status that in the summer of 2015 only two acts got to play headline gigs beneath the venue's iconic 133-metre high arch, with AC/DC's pyrotechnic-laden one-night stand rather eclipsed by Sheeran's trio of shows.

"I said, 'We'll do three nights' and everyone was like, 'Er, no Ed, we'll do one, and be happy with it.' But I wanted to make a statement with it . . . and I don't think one is enough of a statement. One night is like, 'Holy shit, he's got to that point?'; but three is, 'This is bloody ridiculous, what the fuck?' A lot of people can do one Wembley, but I think the last people to do three Wembleys were One Direction and Take That – genuine phenomenons – and I wanted to go out on this album campaign as a phenomenon."

Ed Sheeran delivers these words in a measured, matter-of-fact tone while sit-

ting on the floor of his dressing room in Croke Park, Dublin, two weeks on from his weekend at Wembley. Six hours ahead of stage-time at the first of his two scheduled appearances at the Gaelic Athletic Association's headquarters, Sheeran is dressed unfussily in a red check shirt and plain blue jeans, and with his tousled red hair, wispy beard and ruddy complexion looks suspiciously like a second year agricultural student who's just rolled in from a night on the tiles, rather than a global pop phenomenon. But Sheeran's stats are undeniable. A number 1 record in 22 countries including the UK, U.S. and Australia, 2014's *x* album has now shifted nearly 10 million copies worldwide, almost twice as many as 2011's sleeper hit +, a remarkable trend-bucking achievement in the digital age. Last year Sheeran was the most streamed artist worldwide on Spotify, with 860 million streams, with *x*'s hit ballad "Thinking Out Loud" becoming the service's most streamed song of all time. At the time of writing, in Australia – where Sheeran is set to become the first musician ever to undertake a stadium tour entirely solo – *x* hasn't left the Aria album chart Top 10 since its release in June 2014, notching up eight weeks at number 1, and with cumulative sales now nudging towards 500,000. By any measure, these are *serious* figures.

Originally, the singer's three night stand at Wembley was conceived as the final act of the promotional trek for *x*, an emphatic

"A lot of people can do one Wembley. I wanted to go out on this album campaign as a phenomenon."

exclamation mark to end an extraordinary 18-month campaign. But then word came through that Croke Park was available for two nights, offers were made for another run through America, and six stadium shows were proposed in Australia and New Zealand. Now Sheeran's diary has engagements pencilled in through to December 12th in Auckland. Having averaged 250 gigs a year during his pre-fame apprenticeship, this additional shift clearly doesn't faze Sheeran. And while those three sold-out Wembley shows, documented in his new full-length concert film *Jumpers For Goalposts*, will forever be remembered as milestones in his remarkable journey, the reception meted out to him in Ireland suggests that more glorious victories lie ahead.

It speaks volumes about Britain's self-regarding cultural elitism that on home turf Sheeran's phenomenal success is regarded as something of an embarrassment, his nakedly emotional heart-on-sleeve songwriting dismissed as gauche, graceless and wholly lacking in gravitas by the critical intelligentsia. Indeed, in the run-up to the singer's Wembley appearances, the paucity of coverage on the concerts from the London media was such that it would have been entirely possible for all but inconvenienced local residents to remain wholly oblivious of his homecoming.

By contrast, in Dublin there is a palpable buzz for the return of a singer whom Ireland has adopted as one of their own, due to Sheeran's grandparents hailing from Derry and Wexford. Per capita, this is Sheeran's biggest market – *x* has already been certified 10 times platinum – and his Croke Park double-header is above the crease front page news in the national papers: *everyone* – from Dublin's preternaturally voluble taxi drivers to the city's most imperturbable inked baristas – is hip to his presence. It's impossible to navigate the alleyways of Temple Bar, the Irish capital's vibrant tourist trap entertainment district, without hearing a spirited cover of Sheeran's hit singles. One enterprising city centre restaurant is offering a special 20 per cent discount to customers with ginger hair in oblique tribute to the man, and ice cream makers Walls have created a special 'Ginger-Ed' edition of their popular Gingerbread Sandwich desert, complete with a guitar-wielding likeness of the singer, in recognition of his visit. (Sheeran will later share a photo of the snack with his 4.9 million Instagram followers with the caption "You know you've made it when . . .")

There is, then, a full turn-out for the afternoon press conference Sheeran hosts – ostensibly to plug Jamie Lawson, the first signing to his new Gingerbread Man record label – in one of Croke Park's executive boxes ahead of the first of his two Dublin shows. The singer charms the ladies and gentlemen of the fourth estate

Contributor PAUL BRANNIGAN wrote about the making of 'In Utero' in RS 743.

by referring to the stadium, like a native-born Dubliner, as “Croker”, hails his Irish audience as “fucking mental . . . always the best crowd I’ve played to”, and announces “I said after Wembley was done that this was going to be more fun.” Seasoned hacks can’t resist queuing up for selfies when proceedings draw to a close.

Sheeran’s natural charm is similarly evident when *ROLLING STONE* joins him in his dressing room, aka The Chewie Dungeon – titled in tribute to “The Chewie Monster”, the effects pedal board which throws up the loops that fill out his folksy, acoustic hip-hop sound – 30 minutes later. Even in the forced intimacy of a promotional interview set-up, the singer has a disarming way of making you feel like a guest in his home, rather than a customer in his shop.

“Cup of tea?” he offers, popping a tea bag into a mug, as he waits for the kettle to boil. This homely ritual is temporarily stalled when he discovers that the fridge contains no milk, but a polite entreaty to a uniformed staff member resolves the situation. With a steaming cuppa in his hand, Sheeran then plonks down on the carpet beside a coffee table over-spilling with catering detritus and declares himself ready for interrogation.

“I’m quite free to be honest and say what I want,” he offers by way of introduction. “That doesn’t always work out great in interviews because there’s usually a headline to be grabbed that isn’t always positive. But let’s see how this goes.”

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Ed Sheeran decided he would like to attend a music festival in the company of the friends he grew up with in the small Suffolk market town of Framlingham. Mindful that his presence at the event might attract attention, the singer and his pals opted to cover their faces with costume party masks, and consequently were able to mingle undetected, raving in the woods until daybreak. It was, says the singer, a “liberating, joyous” experience.

“That’s the first time I’ve been in a festival crowd for five years,” he confesses, smiling, “and it felt really normal and really cool.”

Asked to name the festival, the singer politely demurs. “I won’t say, because I’d like to go again,” he explains. “With a different mask.”

The idea of freedom as one of life’s most valuable commodities crops up time and time again in Sheeran’s conversation this afternoon, in matters both personal and professional. Coming as he does from a DIY background, his determination to retain complete artistic autonomy in tandem with his commercial success is understandable, and there’s a note of pride in his

wholesome, clean-cut image. These little acts of independence, you sense, matter.

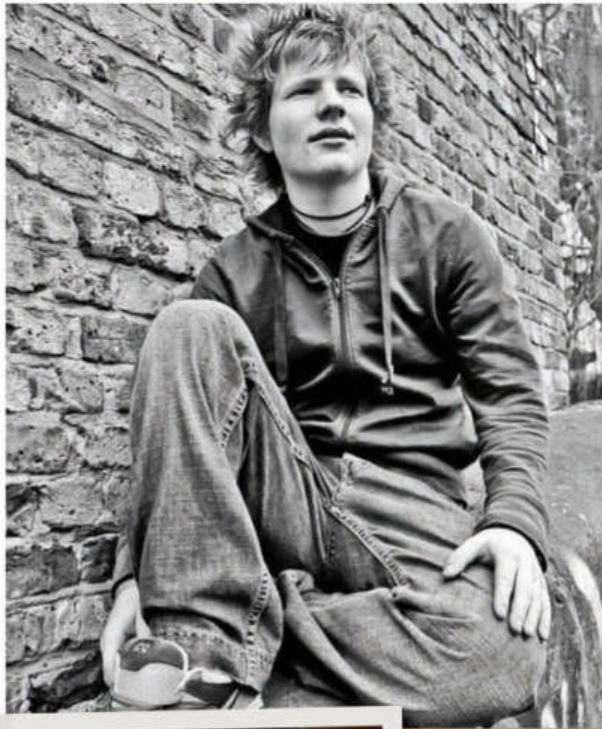
“I’m not going to get ideas above my station doing whatever I want just for the sake of it,” he insists. “Being able to do whatever the fuck you want is great, but maybe the biggest bonus amid this success is having people who you trust telling you what you should and shouldn’t do.”

There’s something rather sweet about Sheeran’s lack of artifice when discussing his success. He genuinely appears to attach no more weight to his friendship with Elton John (a surprise guest at his opening Wembley show), or summer hangs backstage with the Rolling Stones, than he does to the WhatsApp notifications ping-ponging up on his phone this afternoon from friends teasing him about fictitious tabloid stories alleging a new romance with former Pussycat Doll-turned-TV star, Nicole Scherzinger. At one point today, when discussing his relationships with Taylor Swift, Jay Z and Beyoncé, the singer refers to the trio as “ridiculously huge artists who’re at surreal levels of fame”, as if he himself doesn’t belong in this bracket. He may not radiate the same incandescent star quality as his storied pals, but when he talks of being stalked by paparazzi or chased by fans in cars, it’s hard to argue with Jamie Lawson’s contention that Sheeran is “so famous it’s almost dangerous”.

“But unless I go to the awards shows I never get treated that way,” Sheeran protests. “Most days I’m around people who’ve known me for years and treat me exactly the same as they always did. When you’ve been mates with someone since you were 14, going to parties and throwing up for the first time, those people won’t ever be impressed by what you become.

“At award shows I never really feel like I fit in, but I think most artists feel the same way,” he adds. “We all put on a front to sit there. But, I mean, I went to Taylor’s 4th of July party and it was just her and her mates and it was perfectly chilled, there was no real glitz or glamour to it, so I feel like she’s the same way. Even Jay Z and Beyoncé, when we went out in Brooklyn we went to a really quiet pizza place and then went to a dive bar. Even they have that normal side. Everyone does.”

By his own admission though, life for Ed Sheeran is increasingly becoming “less



Come a Long Way

Above: Sheeran in Camden, London, on February 28th, 2008. Left: Seven years on, Sheeran counts the likes of Paul McCartney (seen here at this year’s Grammy Awards) amongst his friends.

voice when he speaks of pushing through recent collaborations with Macklemore and the Weeknd despite record label reservations, or when he suggests that, taking a cue from UK grime star Wiley, he may in the future off-load a few hundred songs which didn’t make his first or second albums as a free download offering to hardcore fans. There’s a sparkle in his eyes too when he speaks of landing an acting role in Karl ‘Sons of Anarchy’ Sutter’s new historical drama *The Bastard Executioner*, knowing full well that his presence in the brutally visceral TV series will jar with his



and less normal". He recognises this by the fact that it now takes him half an hour to negotiate grocery shopping trips in his local supermarket, owing to an increased demand for selfies from fellow customers.

"People are always very polite and respectful," he notes. "The thing that annoys me most when artists have success is when they complain about it, or say they can't do this or that. I've wanted to be at this point for my whole life, so dwelling on the negatives would be such a mistake. Because when this does go downhill, I'm sure I'll wish I could relive every moment of it again."

IT WAS IN DUBLIN, 13 SUMMERS ago, that the 11-year-old Ed Sheeran decided that he would like to be a professional singer-songwriter, after witnessing a gig by local hero Damien Rice at the invitation of his cousin Laura.

"I never expected it to get to this point," he concedes, "but I knew that I'd be able to make a living and survive. I hoped then to get to a point where I could play 200 capacity venues. To me that was always an achievable dream."

For a time, it looked as if the realisation of that dream might represent the summit of Sheeran's achievements. Recognising the

Paying Your Dues

Early on, Sheeran was knocked back by myriad record labels. "I got turned down by the label I'm on now! I guess I wasn't a good proposition."



word-of-mouth buzz on the singer garnered by his relentless gig schedule, in 2009 Universal Records signed Sheeran to a development deal, but subsequently withdrew the singer's contract ahead of the scheduled release of his debut single. Insistent that the snub didn't dent his confidence – "all my peers were making a living comfortably without the backing of massive labels," he notes – the singer concedes that the label's decision did serve as a catalyst for a re-evaluation of his game plan, effectively leading him to split the songs he had earmarked for a potential debut album into five separate independently released EPs. Suggest that his subsequent success might now serve as a glorious two-fingered salute to those who doubted him back in the day, and Sheeran looks startled and perhaps even a little affronted by the notion.

"The Beatles got turned down, the Rolling Stones got turned down, Taylor Swift got turned down . . . every big act has been knocked back by some record label: that's

just how life is," he says slowly, as if explaining the mechanic to a flustered child. "I was turned down by every label . . . I got turned down by the label I'm on now! I guess I wasn't a good proposition. But the moment things start going well you don't ever really need to do a two-fingered 'Fuck you!' to anyone, because it's self-explanatory."

"Ed didn't fit in. He didn't conform. The world conformed to him," says Johnny McDaid, keyboard player with Northern Irish arena rockers Snow Patrol, fiancé of Hollywood actress Courtney Cox and co-writer of five songs on *x*, who describes his friend as "a quirk of timing, talent and truth".

"Being a great artist is hard," he adds. "Being a great artist who reaches a lot of people is much harder. To stand out, you have to be brave. Ed stayed true to himself, he sated an appetite for something fresh and he did it in spite of the nay sayers who would rather bank on a safe aesthetic."

"I think that the way artists become successful is by being themselves," Sheeran muses. "I don't think you should ever do anything that doesn't make you happy. I spent the first few years of my career trying to fit in, and I wasn't happy, and the moment I just started doing things the way I wanted, I got a buzz from it, and things started to come together. And I'm

still happy now. The downsides that come with this life are so miniscule compared to the upsides."

Pressed to elaborate on what exactly those downsides might be, Sheeran speaks in only the vaguest terms, suggesting that "some of the darkest hours come after the biggest highs". He does concede, however, that his relentless work-load hasn't exactly been conducive to finding a significant other to share his life with.

"I've kind of learned the hard way over the past five years of trying to make relationships work that you have to have time to put into them, and I just haven't had that," he admits. "I've had some really great relationships, none of which could blossom into something real because of how much I was away. But I can't beat myself up about that."

It doesn't bother you?

"Oh, it definitely bothers me, because it's quite hard to be a human being when you're in a different city every day. But this isn't an endless thing. At some point my career will slow down, and I can think about finding 'The One'. But that point isn't now.

"My competitive streak is not vindictive. But, yes, of course, I'll always want to come first."

"Career-wise, there's still plenty to do. I can look at a band like U2, who play stadiums worldwide, and see that as something to emulate. Not by doing the big show-big guitars thing that they do better than anyone, but by following my own path.

"Because equally," he says, with a gentle smile, "U2 can't do what I do."

On a warm summer evening in north Dublin, U2's home turf, in front of 85,000 people, Sheeran proves just that. From the instant he steps onto the stripped-back stage with the words, "Hello Croke Park. My name is Ed. My job for the next two hours is to entertain you", the lone figure on stage is spell-binding company, a natural entertainer blessed with an easy charm and no little charisma.

There's a warm-hearted playfulness to Sheeran's performance, which was surely learned during his formative years busking in London. Appending Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" and Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" to "Take Me Back" is a well-received early gambit, as is a bold, straight reading of the Dubliners' take on

traditional standard "Raglan Road", while opening up the *Hobbit*-soundtracking "I See Fire" with an extended intro of Nina Simone's "Feeling Good" makes for excellent theatre. Local heroes Kodaline get to share the spotlight for a reading of "All I Want", but it's in the home stretch where Sheeran truly dazzles, turning in versions of "Thinking Out Loud" and "The A Team" that leave the 75 per cent female crowd a moist-eyed, mascara-dripping mess. With Sheeran now clad in an Ireland soccer shirt, bullish underdog anthem "You Need Me, I Don't Need You" – featuring the singer's brag not to "stop till my name's in lights at stadium heights" – restores the party vibe, even before it segues into Iggy Azalea's "Fancy". Then "Sing" sends Dublin into raptures, with Republic Of Ireland soccer captain John O'Shea singing and fist-pumping the air in glorious denial of a hundred camera phones trained in his direction. Quite the party, all told.

ENGULFED BY BEAMING FAMILY and friends backstage, amid the euphoria, Ed Sheeran might be the only person in Dublin tonight thinking beyond the bottom of the next drink. While the desire to get back to doing "normal shit" ranks high on the 'To Do' list to be consulted after the curtain falls on the *x* tour in Auckland in December – Item No. 1 on said list, he says, is learning how to drive the Mini he purchased earlier this year; Item No. 2 to stock the £900,000 farm he bought in Framlingham with animals – Sheeran's thoughts are already turning to his third album, for which some 40 songs have been penned. One of these, a quite beautiful dedication to Johnny McDaid's late father John, simply titled "Mr McDaid", is described by Sheeran as "the best song I've ever written", but the frighteningly prolific songwriter predicts that he'll amass a further 150 songs before giving consideration to which tracks will make the final cut.

"There'll be certain expectations because of the success of the last records, but I can't let that affect me," says Sheeran. "If I can keep releasing albums and stay on this trajectory I'll be happy."

If you stay on this trajectory, next time out you'll be the biggest pop star in the world.

"Well, just as a personal thing it's good to make a statement to yourself to show that you're progressing," Sheeran considers. "My competitive streak is not vindictive, it's not a competitive thing in terms of looking at Taylor or Rihanna or Lady Gaga or Jay Z and thinking, 'I'm going to win this race and I hope that you don't!' I don't want to trip anyone else up. But, yes, of course, I'll always want to come first. Doesn't everyone?"

"A DEEP RIVER OF HONESTY"

Snow Patrol frontman Gary Lightbody on his friend Ed Sheeran

You've known Ed for a few years: what differences do you see in the Ed Sheeran you took out on tour in 2012, and the guy who's headlining stadiums in 2015?

"It's funny, I was just thinking about that when I saw him play the Hollywood Bowl recently. There is no difference. Myself and Johnny McDaid spent the afternoon with him backstage before the show and he was exactly the same... relaxed, making jokes and sociable right up to – and I mean the *second* he went on stage. It's remarkable in itself. He's more well-travelled of course, but not world-weary, or duller of spirit, or cynical. He played three new songs on the acoustic in the dressing room that afternoon and I was thinking, 'How has he had the time to write these?'"

***x* has been phenomenally successful: what are your thoughts on why so many people have connected with the album?**

"There is a deep river of honesty that runs through everything Ed does. He is completely without filter and speaks his mind, but because he has a good soul it's rarely jarring or combative. And his songs are honest too and full of heart. The people that are drawn to Ed are probably people that are fed up with the artifice of so-called reality TV and the increasingly bland nature of pop music. Plus his live show is just one man standing on stage by himself with a guitar and a loop pedal creating giant pop landscapes: folks see that and think the possibilities are endless. You also can't witness him live and not come away from it convinced he means every word. As big as he is he has an everyman quality still that people relate to in a way they can't relate to pretty much any other pop star. Other stars put a distance between themselves and their audience, Ed doesn't. I've seen crowds of 2,000 people waiting for Ed after a show and he'll take a picture and chat with all of them: it takes him fucking hours!"

What's the most surreal evening you've enjoyed in Ed's company in the past two years?

"Sir Paul McCartney coming over specifically to shake Ed's hand at the Grammys. I was standing there thinking I was witnessing a musical knighthood. Most evenings with Ed are surreal these days, they're never dull!"



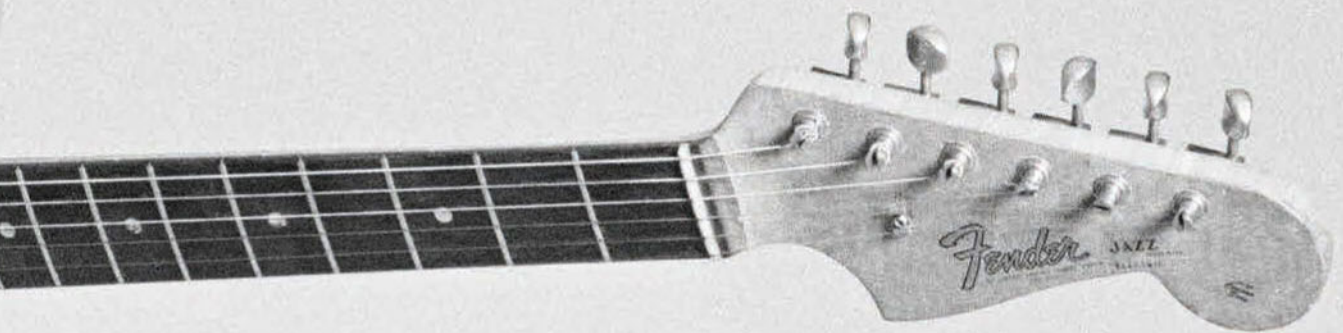


Elvis Costello,
March 1977. A
photoshoot for
the cover of his
debut album, *My
Aim Is True*.

My Life in 10 Songs Elvis Costello

How Bruce Springsteen and Margaret Thatcher – plus a little revenge and guilt – inspired some of Costello's greatest work

By David Fricke



I WAS ASKED TO WRITE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY WHEN I WAS 24,” says Elvis Costello, 61, on the day he receives his first hard-bound copy of his revelatory, evocatively crafted, highly entertaining new memoir, *Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink*. “I said, ‘Could I just live some life?’” ¶ Back then, Costello (born Declan MacManus), the son of a big-band vocalist, blew through rock & roll like a bespectacled tornado, fusing punk, American-roots music and slashing, literary candour on 1977’s *My Aim Is True* and 1978’s *This Year’s Model*, the latter with his feral combo the Attractions. ¶ Early on, he famously said that all of his songwriting was driven by revenge and guilt, an image-making quote he now laughs off. “That was never *all* that it was about,” he says. “It just became a nice tagline to put next to my name. Even when I said it, I was daring people to go, ‘Of course that’s not true.’ Unfortunately, some people are literal-minded.” ¶ Costello has since unleashed a torrent of songwriting across more than two dozen albums, collaborating with artists including Paul McCartney (“As his last co-written hit had been with Michael Jackson, I wondered whether I should be taking some dancing lessons,” Costello writes in one of the book’s best chapters), Burt Bacharach, Allen Toussaint and the Roots – not to mention a still-in-progress album with Kris Kristofferson and Rosanne Cash.

Radio Soul

(early version of Radio Radio) 1975

This was way before *My Aim Is True*. I recorded it with my semipro band Flip City, when we were doing all these things that were clearly indebted to Bruce Springsteen. Obviously, this song morphed into [the 1978 single] “Radio Radio”. I took the pop hooks from this one and flipped its meaning to fit the furious mentality of 1977. But it’s an odd thing: “Radio Radio” doesn’t resonate to me now the way this one does. I sing this version now live and let the audience know this is what I meant to say. The idea is closer to [Van Morrison’s] “Caravan”: that you are tuned in to this mythic thing, radio, celebrated in Bruce’s songs.

Poison Moon

1976

It was the last in a group of songs where I was singing very quietly in my room, before I adopted the musical language that became *My Aim Is True*. I was playing these quiet songs in clubs, wondering why people weren’t hanging on my every word! What I hadn’t worked out was that people I admired, like John Prine and Randy Newman, had audiences who were aware of them, who fell to a hush to listen. But it’s amusing to hear the musical jump that I made from this style to the first album. And now I play this song a lot, because people come to listen to me.

(The Angels Wanna Wear My)

Red Shoes 1977

This was more like a visitation. I wrote it in 10 minutes on a train out of Liverpool – the whole song in one gulp. I

Senior writer DAVID FRICKE wrote about Kurt Cobain in RS 763.

had the essential image, then I worked backward – a dancehall scene with the put-down lines. That kind of framed this other, weirder idea of “I won’t get any older” – I went, “Why am I saying this when I’m 22?” And then there was the whole comedic thing of getting it down. Nowadays you can demo things on your phone. I had to block it out in my mind. Then I had to get off the train, get to my mother’s house, grab an old guitar I had there and play the song until I imprinted it in my memory. I had no tape recorder. I had no way other than repetition to drill it into my head so I wouldn’t lose it.

High Fidelity

1980

This is a pretty exciting record. It’s very raw singing and a great rhythm track. We cut it in Holland, where we had nothing else to do but go mad in the studio. But as I wrote in the book, it’s “an incredibly sad delusion of a song in which a couple finds themselves in different rooms with different lovers, one of them still irrationally believing that their pledge will endure the faithlessness.” So sometimes the ferocity in the music was real. But songs like “Lip Service” [on *This Year’s Model*] and “Mystery Dance” [on *My Aim Is True*] were sort of a joke – a few ideas thrown together with a hook. I was making fun of the ability to write facile pop songs very quickly. The weird thing was people liked it. And I had to find a way to like it myself, because people wanted to hear it.

New Lace Sleeves

1981

Some of the best things the Attractions did, like this one, were at slower tempos. It’s a myth that it’s all about speed and power. “New Lace Sleeves” is almost like dub reggae. I wrote the first lines in about

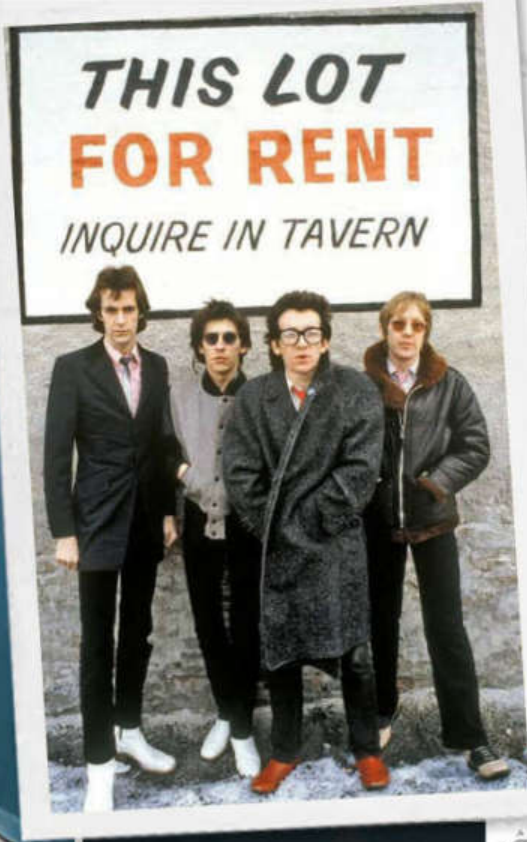
1974. I was writing a big, grand song about postwar life; it was called “From Kansas to Berlin”. But the carnal comedy in there, all the embarrassment of the morning after – I didn’t know that stuff so well then. I knew it pretty well by the time of this song. It also was about class and control. People used to say Margaret Thatcher held her Cabinet with some sort of sexual magnetism. Power is seductive. The fact that the music was slinky suited the words. We had to be exhausted to play like that. We had to drain ourselves of the impulse to play fast.

Beyond Belief

1982

The big change of *Imperial Bedroom* was giving yourself more space to try things. We had never been in the studio for 12 weeks. We were also moving into the period of big open-spaced music – U2, Echo and the Bunnymen – and suddenly our tight little songs were out of step. This is a ranting kind of song. I was consciously writing words that didn’t make sense – to make a blurred picture, because I was living a blurred life. But Pete Thomas’ drumming is so insane. I felt if I let him have his energy, the rest of us played more orchestrally and I sang quietly, it would be much more persuasive. It was the closest we came to that big music – and we never did that again. I didn’t want to sound like we were trying to catch up with the young guys.

“I started my career with all these furious ideas, and people somehow feel it’s a betrayal if you don’t represent that all the time. But life is more complicated than that.”



Indoor Fireworks 1986

Imperial Bedroom, *Punch the Clock* [1983] and *Goodbye Cruel World* [1984] were the most Eighties-sounding records we ever allowed ourselves to make. We had some hits. We had some people come to the party, then we didn't like the party when the people came to the door. I started playing whole sets of songs that nobody – including the Attractions – wanted to hear. I just wanted to get out, and I did: I made *King of America*. The songs are more emotionally raw, and that more raw sound allows that to come through. Those were painful sessions with the Attractions as we were breaking up – on *Blood and Chocolate*, too. That was an ugly period where we made some great records. They come out of the tension.

London's Brilliant Parade 1994

I wouldn't have known how to write those harmonies before *The Juliet Letters* [a 1993

This Year's Model

Clockwise from left: Costello in New York on May 12th; in Chicago with the Attractions in 1979; with his father, big band leader and trumpeter Ross MacManus, in 1994.

strings-and-voice collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet]. That opened my head up – I can put these other bizarre chords in and it can still be a pop song. It's also the only thing I have ever tried to write about celebrating a place – and pointing out things that are not so beautiful about it. This was also one of the few songs where pulling the Attractions back together made any kind of sense. We couldn't have recorded it in the wound-up way we were before.

When I Was Cruel No. 2 2002

The song is about accepting that there is a perception of you, and the music is backward-leaning and forward-leaning at the same time. I started out with all of these furious ideas, and people somehow feel it's

a betrayal if you don't represent that all the time. But life is more complicated than that. There are sitting targets in the song, and the narrator is like, "I could have assassinated these people, but it's not worth it anymore." [Laughs] It's not worth what it takes out of your soul to go back down that road.

The Puppet Has Cut His Strings 2013

It was at the end of the very long process of making *Wise Up Ghost*. It was these strange chords. Most of the songs on that album are outward-looking bulletins. I don't know why the music made me go there, but that night I wrote an account of my father's last days and hours. I wrote the lyrics in one draft and sang it in one take, into my computer on the kitchen counter. It's described in a way as clear as I can – the way music was my father's companion to his last breath. It's a sombre conclusion. But why be afraid of it?

PREVIOUS SPREAD: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES, 3



Richards at his home in Connecticut in July

A photograph of a house with a green porch railing and a tree in the foreground. The house has a red exterior wall and a window with a dark frame. The porch railing is a vibrant green color. In the foreground, there is a large, leafy green tree and a smaller, rounded green bush. A stone path leads from the bottom left towards the house. The overall scene is a well-maintained residential property.

It Ain't Easy Being Keith

Rock's immortal pirate king is ready to get back in the hunt. By Patrick Doyle

PHOTOGRAPH BY THEO WENNER

‘**T**

HEY'RE ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AWAY," says Hervé, the moustachioed owner of Luc's, a French bistro tucked away in a back alley in the Norman Rockwell-esque town of Ridgefield, Connecticut. Customers are gently told that the front patio is closed. The restaurant's music changes, from classical to Toots and the Maytals' "Pressure Drop".

At exactly 3 p.m., Keith Richards steps out of a chauffeured black Mercedes sedan. (Despite what you might think, Richards is usually punctual to a fault.) He looks off-duty in a brown leather jacket, aviators and black Uggs; he's missing his usual bandanna and the piratical fishhooks that often adorn his hair. A sandalwood aroma follows him (his friend Tom Waits says he smells like a "campfire").

Richards, 71, has just come off the road with the Rolling Stones, who finished their latest U.S. stadium run a month ago, and is taking advantage of the break between tours to release his new solo album, *Crosseyed Heart*. He steps inside to chat with the bartender. Then he greets a pair of teenage boys at a patio table, kissing them on the head; they hug him reverently – it looks like a scene out of *The Godfather*. It turns out the boys are Hervé's sons, and Hervé is married to the niece of Richards' wife, Patti Hansen. "I call him my French nephew," Richards says with a laugh, finally taking a seat out front and lighting up one of many Marlboro Reds. "It's a family affair. They've been here for 15 years, and it's become one of the most popular French bistros in New England. And it happens to be my local hang."

Hervé's wife, a friendly blonde woman named Marissa, brings over some french fries. "Thanks, darling," Richards says, but he doesn't touch them. (He often doesn't eat when he goes to restaurants, even when he's dining out with his family; instead, he'll cook himself some chicken or bangers and mash later that evening.)

He lives about 15 minutes away, in a sprawling, Italian-style villa with a tennis court and a guesthouse, sitting next to a 1,700-acre nature preserve. Visitors are greeted by two French bulldogs; the walls

are full of photos from Stones tours. He's been in Connecticut since the late Eighties, after his daughters Alexandra and Theodora were born. Richards and Hansen were living in Manhattan's East Village, which lacked green space and held some less-than-domestic associations for him. "On the odd occasion there was a [heroin] drought in the Seventies," he remembers, "we'd have to go down the East Side and carry a shooter. Just in case."

"A year or two after they were born, I said, 'I can't bring the kids up on Fourth Street,'" he says. "Not when there's fresh air and some countryside not far away. It's not called New England for nothing – a lot of it reminds me very much of parts of England, of Sussex or Surrey."

At home, he will play Mexican dominoes or watch the History Channel or cable news – which often makes him angry, like when he saw James Blake getting tackled by a cop. "Another pointer that you can't get rid of racism with the stroke of a pen," says Richards. He also followed the protests in Baltimore and Ferguson: "Cops used to slap you around the ear and send you home. Now they shoot you." He has a large home library and is currently reading a book about rogue Napoleonic-era sea captain Thomas Cochrane. Richards is a naval-history buff: He told his biographer, James Fox, to read Patrick O'Brian's *Master and Commander*, a historical novel set on a British ship in 1800, to better understand his "friendship and adversity" with Mick Jagger. ("He felt it was something that explained his sadness," says Fox.)

On any given day, Richards might fax a couple of notes to his longtime guitar tech, Pierre de Beauport, asking him to investigate an uncredited Little Richard guitarist named Rudy Richard or an obscure reggae record. Richards will watch new movies that come in the mail, and walk around the house playing an acoustic guitar. "If the Old Lady says, 'That's nice,'" he says, "I'll follow it up."

He orders a vodka-soda. As the waiter walks away, Richards speaks up: "Double 'em!"

Lately, he has been recovering from a painful injury, which he's been keeping secret. At the July 4th show in Indianapolis, he was running down the catwalk toward the stage during the sax solo of "Miss You" and tripped face-forward. "Somebody tossed a red straw boater hat, and it landed right in front of my feet," he says. "I kicked it aside – 'All right, that's out

the way' – and it fucking bounced back in front of me, and I hit the floor. And suddenly, I'm on my hands and knees in front of 60,000 people, you know? My bracelet came off from the shock. It was, 'OK, get out of this one, pal!'"

"I might've cracked a rib," he says, placing his hand on his right side. "There's nothing doctors can do about it. I thought, 'Shit, if I let them know how much I'm hurting, the doctors and the insurance companies will be like, 'Cancel the next gigs.' Fuck it. I'll live with it. After 50 years on the stage, you're going to fall over occasionally and take a knock.'"

It's a classic Richards story – the close scrape and the getaway. His career is full of those stories, whether it's the mayor of Boston personally bailing him and Jagger out of jail to play a 1972 show, or Richards dodging a possible seven-year heroin-trafficking sentence by agreeing to play a concert for the blind. (Pete Townshend has said the Stones have "a sinister reputation for miracles".) But Richards' greatest getaway is the sheer fact of his physical survival – that he's lived faster than anybody and yet failed to die young, or, indeed, at all. His uncanny resilience first became part of the cultural lore in the 1970s, when U.K. rock magazine *New Musical Express* voted him

"Most Likely to Die" for 10 years in a row. These days, his apparent immortality has become an Internet meme: One joke goes, "For every cigarette you smoke, God takes an hour away from your life and gives it to Keith Richards"; another goes, "We need to start worrying about what kind of world we are going to leave for Keith Richards."

But there's no disputing what Richards has left us: He's the guy who helped bring the blues to white America, who has given us some of the greatest ballads of all time ("Ruby Tuesday", "Wild Horses") and the most menacing anthems ("Jumpin' Jack Flash", "Midnight Ram-

bler"). Richards invented a heavily rhythmic, sometimes droning guitar style – strange tunings, almost no solos – that stumps even his heroes. "I try to copy stuff from him, and I can't get it, man," says Buddy Guy. "And I've been trying ever since I met him." With his low-slung guitar cool, Richards helped define the very idea of what a rock star is to every generation that followed. He has taken note of this fact: "I'm glad you like the hairdo and the outfits, boys," he says of the thousands of guitarists who look like him. "I always take it as a compliment."

Associate editor PATRICK DOYLE interviewed Jeff Tweedy in RS 767.



RICHARDS NEEDED EVERY bit of his iron constitution in February 2006, when he slipped while jumping off a two-metre-high branch on vacation in Fiji, slamming his head on a tree trunk. Two days later, he suffered two seizures and was flown to Auckland, New Zealand, where surgeons removed a blood clot from the surface of his brain. He was told he shouldn't work for six months, but he was back on the road in six weeks, taking Dilantin, an anti-seizure medication with side effects that can include confusion and decreased coordination (which he still takes). Richards' team was terrified he was going to fall during a show; reviews were not kind to his playing. "You could make the argument that he was clouded," says de Beauport.

The fog lasted well after the tour ended. "I think that bang on the head, that did quite a bit more damage [than people thought]," Richards says. "You take a blow like that, you kind of feel stunned for another year or two afterward, really. You know, you suddenly realise you've been semiconscious."

The Stones went on a long break. Richards stopped playing guitar and turned his attention to writing his autobiography, *Life*, spending hundreds of hours with author Fox at Richards' home in Turks and Caicos. The darker parts of the writing process – delving into his decade-long heroin addiction, which ended in 1978, and the death of his two-month-old son in 1976 – "was very, very difficult for him," says Fox. "He touched on these very sad things that sort of still haunt him, and it visibly affected him at the time. We had

LIVE WITH ME

From left: Hansen; daughters Angela and Alexandra; son Marlon's wife, Lucie; grandson Orson; daughter Theodora; Richards; Marlon; and granddaughters Ida and Ella in Turks and Caicos in 2010.

to go very gingerly. Keith's way was to give himself a bottle, give himself protection, to create this kind of boundary so that you can go on creating inside it. I think he denied all this stuff with the help of lots of substances for a very long time."

"[The book] drained more out of me than I had thought," says Richards. "I can play two Stones shows a day and I'm OK, you know? But the prolonged research, and your whole life is coming back in front of you – oh, man." Richards was highly critical of Jagger, describing a friendship soured by business, ego and old grudges, and the two didn't speak for months.

Life topped *The New York Times'* best-seller list, and it won a Norman Mailer Award. But the irony was not lost on Richards that his biggest hit in years was not a piece of music. "You make the best records you can for 50 years," he says, "and suddenly, a book..." With the Stones on hiatus, Richards told friend Steve Jordan – who had played drums and written with him in his Eighties side project the X-Pensive Winos – that he might retire from music. "I thought the book might be the crowning glory," Richards says. "I just hit one of those points. Do you have anything more to say?

Can you still get the guys to do it? Because I'm useless without a gang."

Jordan persuaded Richards to play at New York's One East studio once a week – just guitar and drums – to keep Richards' chops up. "We had a blast," says Jordan. "He would just start digging through his memory bank for some stuff, then we would jam and just start rocking." The results would evolve into *Crosseyed Heart*: Working much like Richards and Charlie Watts did when they recorded early versions of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Street Fighting Man" alone in the studio, Richards recorded guitar, bass and piano tracks all by himself. One of the songs he and Jordan recorded, "Trouble", may be Richards' most joyous rocker since "Before They Make Me Run". "Blues in the Morning" is a revved-up tribute to Chuck Berry, with a powerful sax solo by late Stones alum Bobby Keys. "It's the most straight-ahead rock & roll you can get," says Richards.

On the gospel-tinged ballad "Just a Gift", Richards writes a letter to someone he's trying to reconnect with: "If you want and feel a need to call... my address hasn't changed at all, and I'm still the same." Richards has never been afraid to write about Jagger, so I ask if this is one of those songs. "You know, that's a good thought," he says. "When you're writing love songs, you're really thinking about a chick. But then again, the Rolling Stones is my wife!"

People who visited Richards in the studio were struck by his good mood. "We'd order pizza at night for the crew," says Morgan Neville, who directed the new Netflix documentary *Keith Richards: Under the Influence*. "Everybody would be

crammed in this tiny control room – like, 15 of us. And Keith would sit on the couch with such a grin on his face. He just wanted to be in the mix. He laughed nonstop.”

The last time Richards formed a side band during a falling out with Jagger – the X-Pensive Winos – was much wilder. Guitarist Waddy Wachtel remembers the Winos staying in a house in Toronto and stumbling downstairs one morning: “We’d been up until God knows when. I had just gotten out of bed. I was sitting there, and all of a sudden, behind me, I hear ice cubes hitting a glass. And it’s Keith, making his first drink. He said, ‘You want a drink?’ I said, ‘No, I don’t want a fucking drink! I can still taste the vodka in my mouth from last night!’ It gave me a chill.”

Wachtel remembers one Thanksgiving with Richards in the late Eighties: “We had bourbon and ice. That was dinner.” Wachtel saw it as progress when he and the band were able to get Richards to switch from bourbon to vodka. “At least he didn’t have all that sugar making his brain insane,” says Wachtel. “He could get in a dark place.” When the session guitarist showed up for *Crosseyed Heart*, he was surprised and happy to see Richards actually *eating*. “We’d never done that before,” says Wachtel.

Richards still has a temper. Fox remembers leaving a Turks and Caicos bar with him when a local kid ran up to him with an iPhone, telling him to listen to his band. “Keith just turned on him like a barracuda and said, ‘Fuck off!’ And he deserved it because there were no manners, there was nothing. It was justified. But it certainly wasn’t the response the kid was expecting, if you can imagine.”

But Richards “is in a better place than he was even 10 years ago,” says Wachtel. “He just had a big smile on his face.”

LAST YEAR, RICHARDS PUBLISHED another book, *Gus & Me*, a children’s tale about how his grandfather taught him to play classical guitar. “Gus never forced anything on me,” says Richards, sipping his second vodka-tonic. “He just suggested, or dangled things. Like the guitar, which hung on the wall. ‘When you can reach it, you can have it.’”

Now, Richards has five grandchildren of his own, ages one to 19, all of whom he sees regularly. “It’s not the first thing you think of in life: ‘I wonder what I’ll be like as a grandfather?’” he says. “But once it happens, there’s a certain relationship, that distance between parent and grand-

parent, which sometimes can be very, very useful and very inspiring. A couple of my grandsons, all they want to do is go on the road with me now.” He laughs. “Well, maybe this isn’t the best idea.” One of them is Orson, who is 15 and looks like a young Keith, except with blond hair. “He likes to hang with me, but he’s got to go



RIP THIS JOINT

With the Stones this year (top), and the Winos in 1988. “After shows, we’d have a drink, a snort and listen to some loud fucking rock & roll,” says Wachtel, at left.

to school still,” Richards says. “So I play Scrabble with him, on my computer. It’s the only thing I use the thing for. I give him the worst words I can think of: *shit-head, asshole*.” A group of local middle-aged women at a nearby table, who had been pretending not to eavesdrop, start laughing.

Richards still talks about his musical heroes like a young fan. He exchanges faxes with Chuck Berry and stays in touch with Jerry Lee Lewis, who he calls “obstinate and beautifully unique”. Now that

Berry, Little Richard and Fats Domino are in their eighties and Lewis is on his farewell tour, the Stones will soon be the elder statesmen on the road. “Don’t remind me!” Richards says, covering his face with his hands. “I never thought I’d get this far. Now, I have to think about this and wonder what to do with it. I don’t know, man.

There’s always been the cats in front of me. This is the thing, with evolving. It’s my turn for growing old.”

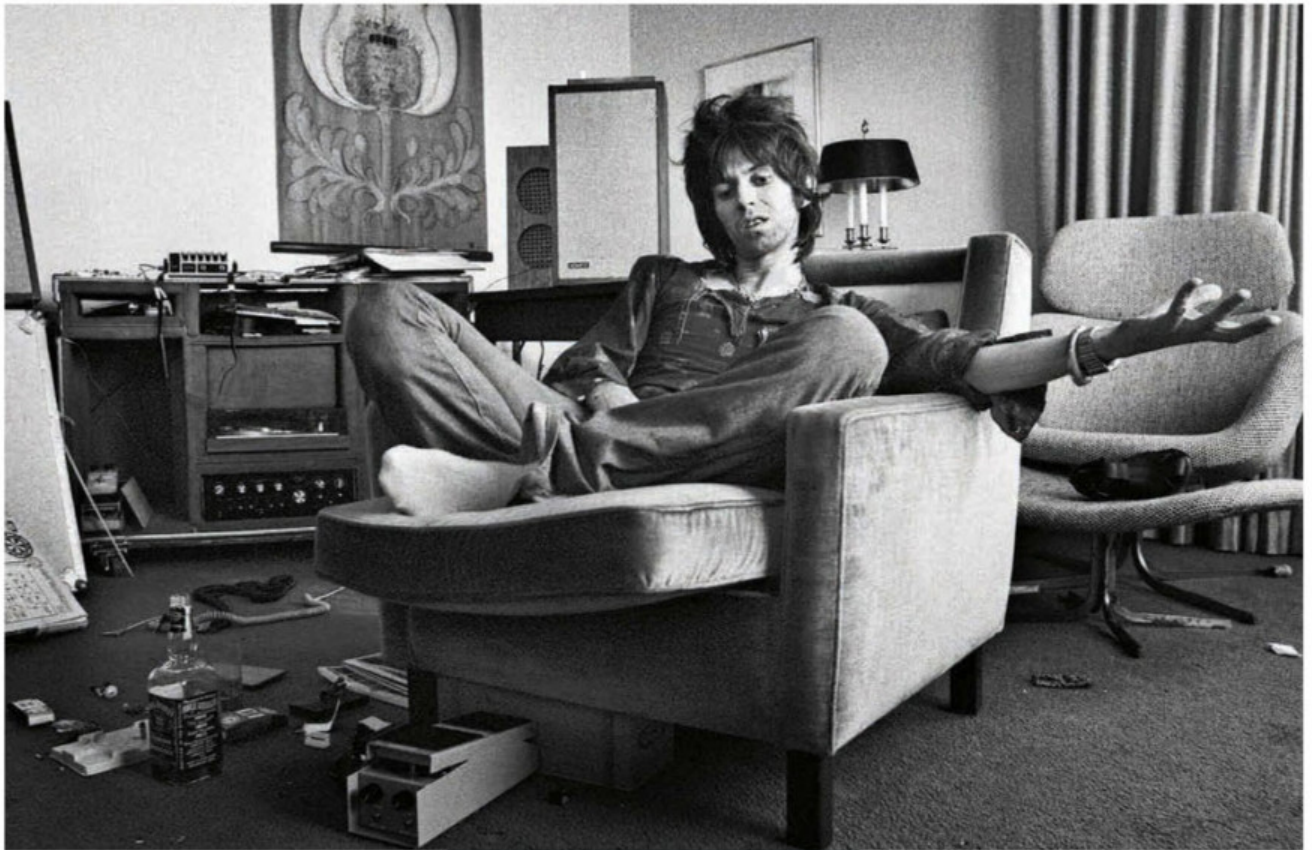
The conversation turns to the British Invasion bands that followed the Stones. “I just was never really interested in that many English rock & roll bands, at all,” says Richards. “I usually like guys like Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, and that was before I was even recording. The Yeses and the Journeys and them left me a bit cold.”

Richards “loves Jimmy Page” but isn’t a Led Zeppelin guy. “As a band, no, with John Bonham thundering down the highway in an uncontrolled 18-wheeler. Jimmy is a brilliant player. But I always felt there was something a little hollow about it.” Richards actually prefers Robert Plant’s solo work, particularly his album with Alison Krauss. “I heard that and thought, ‘Finally, he’s getting his chops!’”

Richards pauses – “I don’t want it coming out like...” – then smiles and continues: “I always thought [Roger] Daltrey was all flash. And I love Pete Townshend, but I always thought the Who were a crazy band. [Keith] Moon was an incredible drummer, but only with Pete Townshend. He could play to Pete like nobody else in the world. But if somebody threw him into a session with somebody else, it was a disaster. There’s nothing wrong with that – sometimes you’ve got that one paintbrush, and you rock it.”

Recently, Richards made headlines for calling *Sgt. Pepper* “rubbish” (he also criticised the Stones’ *Their Satanic Majesties Request* for copying it). Talking about Paul McCartney’s live shows, Richards says, “I like Paul. I don’t know if I could do that all by myself. As long as Paul enjoys what he’s doing. A lot of people enjoy it,” he adds with a shrug. “But I don’t see any *push* out of it.”

RICHARDS MAKES IT abundantly clear that the Rolling Stones still have the “push”. He lets it slip that he just returned from a band meeting in London. “We had a little chat,” he says. The Stones might get together to start working on their first album since 2005’s *A Bigger Bang* as early as Christmas, or after their planned South American tour in early



2016. "I'd love to shove them in the studio in April, hot off the road," Richards says. "These guys ain't getting any younger, but at the same time, they're getting better."

Since the Stones got back on the road, in 2012, Richards has been more engaged. He's worked with Jagger on choosing the set lists for each show, which he hadn't done for years. One consequence of his Fiji accident was that Richards had to stop using cocaine before gigs, and reduce his alcohol intake. "He was very determined to do that," says a source close to him. Richards says it's helped with his post-show recovery time: "Take cocaine onstage, and you're drenched. Now, half an hour, drive me home, and I'm ready for anything."

In *Life*, Richards boasted that for many years he slept only twice a week ("This means I have been conscious for at least three lifetimes"). Now, he's started going to bed at 1 or 2 a.m., and shrugs off the schedule he kept for all those years. "Done that. Been there," he says.

"[Keith] is the first one in the rehearsal room and the last one to leave," says de Beauport. "Nothing is going to happen without him there."

Richards struggles with arthritis, which has taken a toll on his hands; many of his guitar parts, like the fills in "Honky Tonk Women", have been simplified onstage. But he's gotten creative – he recently learned how to play "Let's Spend the Night Together" in open-G tuning so he can sing and play at the same time. "I don't equate

BEGGARS BANQUET

"I think I've taken more out of drugs than they took out of me," says Richards, pictured in 1976.

his musicality to his level of dexterity," says de Beauport. "If he's complaining his fingers are knotty-looking, that doesn't mean he's less musical that day."

Richards may be on good behaviour, but he can't help but stir up a little mischief: At a recent Pittsburgh show, the grinning guitarist interrupted Jagger's introduction of the Penn State Concert Choir, abruptly launching the band into "Satisfaction". Sometimes he will begin playing in the middle of keyboardist Chuck Leavell's "one, two, three, four" count-offs, or kick off songs at slower tempos than Jagger prefers. Says de Beauport, "Keith is like, 'Yeah, right – it goes like this.'"

Since they reconciled, Richards and Jagger have had long talks, which Richards said they hadn't done in a long time. One of the conversations has centred on how to open up their sound. "I think Mick Jagger is probably the best blues-harp player that I've heard," says Richards. "He's up there with Little Walter – he amazes me. So we have this conversation: 'You phrase like that – why don't you try to sing more like that?' And Mick would say, 'It's two totally different things!' And my reply is, 'It's just blowing air out of your

mouth!' When Mick is singing, he tends to phrase pretty much the same way as the record goes. Whereas on harp, he'll let it fly. That's basically what we talk about, and probably our bone of contention.

"But we just need to find a good room somewhere, and put in a few microphones," he says. "And away you go."

"I LOVE STUDIOS, EVEN WHEN they're empty," Richards says through a haze of smoke on a studio couch, staring at a couple of Gibson guitars through the glass control-room window. He's quiet; there's nothing but a faint electronic noise. "There's that little hum. Silence is your canvas. You look out there and you think, 'Ah, the possibilities!'"

Richards is here to meet his entourage at Germano Studios in Lower Manhattan, where he recorded much of the new album, before we head to a radio interview. A month after our meeting in Connecticut, he has more wired energy, bouncing his leg, his dark eyes fixating heavily on every question. Richards' hair spills out of a striped bandanna. He's wearing Nike tennis shoes and a snakeskin jacket over a T-shirt that says DO NOT X-RAY. He seems a little more dangerous, laughing as I mention the anecdote about him throwing a knife at a music exec who suggested he change a song during the *Steel Wheels* sessions in 1989. "I've got pretty good aim," he says. "It just missed him."



KEITH'S GREEN ACRES
 "Connecticut reminds me of parts of England," says Richards.

"I look upon records as an audio painting," he says, gesturing grandly toward the mixing board. "What's needed here? Overload it with guitars - and then take them all out, and just use a bit of this one." It's like your paintbrush is that damn desk with little faders. It's never ceased to fascinate me." Richards used to stay up all night experimenting - overdriving an acoustic guitar into a cheap tape machine to create the sound on "Street Fighting Man", or building the hypnotic intro of "Gimme Shelter" out of layers of guitars.

Many of his songs, like "Before They Make Me Run", skip bars and beats in ways that make them deviously hard to cover. "The beat is something to be played with, moved around," he says. "The beat isn't there as some solid, concrete, one, two, three, four. It's something to shift and fly and move." Richards repeats one of his favourite sayings, which he learned from an "old Rasta": "To think is to stink."

It's time to go to iHeartRadio headquarters. Richards strides out of the studio with his manager, Jane Rose; an ex-

NYPD security guard who he shares with Justin Bieber; and Tony Russell, his personal assistant since 1988, to a waiting SUV - and is greeted by a group of hardcore (and likely professional) autograph seekers, all of whom are middle-aged men.

"One each, Keith, one each!" yells a guy in a baseball cap holding up a Telecaster.

"I'm on the move," Richards says, rolling up the window of the Suburban as the driver hits the gas. But there's traffic, and minutes later, we miss a green light and they return, blocking other cars in the street.

"Watch your backs, brothas!" he says in his best London-Rasta tone. "I cannot do this. You get run over – I get sued!"

Finally, Richards relents, rolling the window back down. The winded mob shove forward LPs of *Beggars Banquet* and *Bridges to Babylon* and the Telecaster. He signs everything, except a *Tattoo You* LP, the cover featuring a face-painted Jagger. "Yeah, I ain't signing *that* motherfucker," he says, rolling up the window as the man pleads. "Wrong side," Richards says. "The other side is me. Hey, boys, use your sense!" He lets out a rusty cackle.

We arrive at the iHeartRadio green room, and an assistant named Matt takes the plastic off a case of small airplane bottles of Absolut, removes one and pours a "nuclear waste" – two ounces of vodka, orange soda and lots of ice – into a red Solo cup. Richards is bubbly, talking about all the smoking in old TV shows like *Perry Mason*. "When I grew up," he says, "you thought you were grown up when you could sneak into a pub and have a cigarette and a drink. And you just grow up. It's a habit – it's not an addiction."

Rose looks sceptical. "OK," she says. "Now, what's the difference between a habit and an addiction?"

"Cocaine is not an addiction," says Richards. "It's only a habit. If you run out of coke, you'll go to sleep and eat a lot, but ain't nothing else gonna happen."

As usual, Richards ignores the no-smoking sign and lights a cigarette. "When we did *Shine a Light*, every politician, all kinds of Secret Service was there," says Guy, remembering the filming of the 2008 Stones concert movie. "I was rehearsing for 'Champagne & Reefer'. Keith fired up a reefer as big as my thumb, and I said, 'Is he faking this for the song?' And he said, 'I don't fake nothing, man.'"

Several giddy company employees surround Richards. They each have a story for him; one tells him about seeing the Stones in 1969. Another's father-in-law made the guitar he played in a *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. "When I get out, I get fascinated with all these people with all these different things to do," says Richards later. "And they automatically assume that you know everything they're talking about." A producer comes in to brief him on the Q&A. He tells Richards he'll be asked how he created the guitar sound on "Street Fighting Man" and other songs. "And talk about how they relate to this album," Richards says, finishing the sentence. "I get the drift."

"The only thing we ask," the producer says, "is bite the f-bomb. Do your best to try not to let anything slip out."

"I don't 'fuck' a lot," Richards says. He doesn't like too much preparation before interviews, preferring to keep it spontaneous. "The only question I need to hear is, 'How do you plead?'"

While he waits to go on, he talks about seeing Donald Trump at *Saturday Night*

KILLER SOLO KEITH

Beyond "Happy": Six
essential Richards tracks

'Sing Me Back Home'

"TORONTO TAPES" (1977)

Richards was facing seven years in jail on a heroin charge when he recorded this haunting solo piano take of a Merle Haggard classic he had learned from late friend Gram Parsons. "I thought that was the last time I'd get my hands on instruments for a while," Richards says. "Things didn't look too bright."

'Make No Mistake'

TALK IS CHEAP (1988)

Richards mixed reggae and Memphis R&B on this gorgeous duet with Sarah Dash, formerly a Labelle, whose refined voice works perfectly with Keith's gravelly croon. "When he sings in the lower register, he has such a rich tone," says producer Steve Jordan.

'I Could Have Stood You Up'

TALK IS CHEAP (1988)

Richards took "a little stroll through the rock & roll alley" on this lovely tribute to rockabilly and Fifties-style doo-wop with old pal Mick Taylor.

'Eileen'

MAIN OFFENDER (1992)

This heartfelt plea suggests the early Beatles playing at a biker bar. "Pavarotti it ain't," Richards says of his voice. "But then again, I don't like Pavarotti's voice."

'Deuce and a Quarter'

ALL THE KING'S MEN (1997)

Richards travelled to Levon Helm's barn to join him and Elvis' old bandmates Scotty Moore and D.J. Fontana for an electrifying rockabilly throwdown.

'Robbed Blind'

CROSSEYED HEART (2015)

A woozy ballad about a drug dealer who may or may not have killed his girlfriend. Keith wrote it right after waking up: "'Satisfaction' was the only other one I've written in bed, I think," he says.

Live's 40th-anniversary party. He does his best Trump impression, hunching down and pursing his lips: "You're the greatest," he says, mimicking Trump saying hello to him and then swooping around to shake someone else's hand. "You're the greatest."

Last night, Richards watched a Trump rally in Dallas on TV. "It was the Donald Trump show. He's got 'em by the balls right now. I don't know how long he can keep up that show without changing the *set list*, but that's another thing. Meanwhile, his closest runner-up is a black neurosurgeon. Between the two of them, they've really smashed up the Republican Party."

Richards is well aware of his own public persona. "I can understand my image in most people's minds," he says. "'Good old Keith will take anything, and do whatever he wants to do.' And that gave me the license to do that. Nine-to-fivers would all like to have the freedom that I have. They've given me the license to shit in the street."

In a short while, in front of a studio audience, Richards will crack jokes about never knowing when the cops are going to show up; tell the story again of how he wrote "Satisfaction" in his sleep; and talk about meeting Muddy Waters in 1964 ("My legs are still shaking").

Later at home, he might read a historical novel, or watch a WWII documentary. But here, he is the Keith everyone is happy to know still exists – the Richards who, when he was facing a trial for allowing pot to be smoked on his property in 1967, told the judge to his face, "We are not old men, and we are not worried about petty morals."

Before that moment on the stand years ago, wrote Marianne Faithfull, "Keith had been overshadowed by Mick and Brian [Jones]. But his defiance made him a major folk hero. This was the beginning of Keith's legend. A symbol of dissipation and the demonic. And the amazing thing is that subsequently, he actually became that. He turned it all to his advantage."

"That one just popped out," Richards says of that day in court. "It was sort of surreal theatre to me. From that moment, I felt that it was not just me, and not just the Stones, against the establishment – it was our generation. I realised that there was a bigger jury out there behind me."

"I'll never forget," says Fox, "when he did his book signing in Piccadilly for *Life*, people camped out for two nights, just to meet this great figure. And they filed by with enormous politeness and a kind of love for hours. Keith was completely blown away by that. The fans didn't just love the Stones; they loved *him*."

As he waits to go on, Richards' knees are bouncing. He's fiddling with his lighter, peeling the sticker off. A producer opens the door to give him a five-minute warning. Richards puts on his snakeskin jacket, slaps his knees and gets up:

"It's fuckin' showtime!"

CLOSE-UP

VISIONS OF JOANNA

Birdwatching with Joanna Newsom, indie heroine and proud weirdo

BY JONAH WEINER


IT'S A MONDAY AFTERNOON IN LOS ANGELES, AND JOANNA Newsom – a 33-year-old with the unlikely distinction of being American pop music's premier harp-playing auteur – is about to do some birdwatching. It's about 4 p.m., but Newsom, a night owl and insomniac, just ate breakfast at an old-timey restaurant in Los Feliz. With Miu Miu shades covering her eyes, she walks to her Audi hybrid SUV, which she parked in a comically tight space, and climbs aboard. "I haven't had a car since I was 16 that couldn't fit a harp," she says, as we head off toward Griffith Park.

Newsom, who lives in L.A. with her husband, *Saturday Night Live* alum and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* star Andy Samberg, has sold hundreds of thousands of records and earned champions like Paul Thomas Anderson, who cast her in *Inherent Vice* and directed the video for her most recent single. She's just released *Divers*, her fourth LP. Like all of Newsom's releases, it wears its staggering ambition – and staggering weirdness – on its beautiful, elaborately brocaded sleeve: The single "Sapokanikan" quotes from Percy Shelley, a 1918 *New York Times* article and George Washington; elsewhere, Newsom sings about oyster harvesting, old mills and Einsteinian space-time. This lyrical hyperabundance matches the music, which draws on unhip genres like Celtic folk, baroque classical and Sixties orchestral pop. The result is as dazzling, and daunting, as the wildest prog-rock opuses.

All of which might seem to make Newsom an odd match for Samberg, whose digital shorts, steeped in pop-culture references, helped usher in the YouTube era. But Newsom says they spend a lot of time talking about making art, and have found fundamentally common ground. "We both do something that relies a lot on dark magic," she says. "Something you can't overexplain or it'll get killed." The couple have been together for eight years. After Samberg left *SNL*, they moved from Manhattan to L.A., marrying in Big Sur in 2013 and reportedly buying a 1920s mansion that in-

cludes, among other head-spinning details, a vaulted glass atrium and a panoply of painted ceilings, tiled walls, stained glass and curved Moorish archways. Newsom emphasises that those reports remain unconfirmed, and declines to discuss on the record where she does or doesn't live. "I've had a horrible experience of people coming to my house" – mostly in her native Nevada City, California – "and I don't want it to happen again here," she says. "There's a delusion and emotional instability that maybe I should have more compassion for, but my response is pure rage." The couple's friends include Samberg's old *SNL* colleague Maya Rudolph and Anderson, her husband. That friendship led to Newsom's work in *Inherent Vice* as ensemble player and narrator. "With the voice-over stuff, if something was off about the way I was doing it, he'd almost hum a melody and I'd do that melody."

After a quick drive, we step through a cyclone fence and into a bird sanctuary. Newsom wears a sundress whose muted earth tones and subtle Navajo print suggest a chicly tailored tablecloth. "Those are house finches over there," she says. "If there was more agave, we'd see way more ravens. You've got to go a tiny bit west for that. And if there were more flowers blooming, we'd see a shit-ton of hummingbirds."

Newsom absorbed her ornithological know-how from her parents. Her father, an oncologist and hematologist, read up on a variety of subjects, sharing facts about science, history and assorted esoterica; her mother, an internist, was devoted to environmental and feminist causes, and to meetings of her African-drum group, which gathered above the family garage. Newsom says that one of the inspirations for *Divers* was the liberatory experience of watching birds fly. "You watch birds and you glimpse something, like a defiance of certain laws that otherwise seem undefiable. Laws that seem to govern and define our lives in a way that's impossible to transcend." A peregrine falcon appears, strafing some dusty hills high above us. "Is undefiable a word?" she asks. 

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON



THE
ROLLING
STONE
INTERVIEW

Obama Takes On Climate Change

By Jeff Goodell



IN ALASKA, PRESIDENT OBAMA WAS IN A VERY GOOD mood. He visited the state in late summer to draw attention to the looming climate catastrophe the world faces, but with the exception of one big policy speech when he sounded as apocalyptic as any hemp-growing activist, he spent most of his three days up north beaming. “He’s happy to be out of his cage,” one aide joked. Others credited the buoyant U.S. economy or the fact that the president had just learned that he had secured enough votes to protect the hard-fought nuclear deal with Iran from being derailed by Senate Republicans. ¶ Whatever the reason, you could see the cheerfulness in his face the moment he stepped out of his armoured presidential limo at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, where the air was hazy with smoke from the wildfires that had burned millions of acres in Alaska. The president was all smiles, shaking hands with local pols and then bounding up the stairs into Air Force One. No suit and tie, no sir – today, on what was the third and final day of his trip, he was dressed for adventure in black outdoor pants, a grey pullover and a black Carhartt jacket.

He was heading north to Kotzebue, a village about 50 kilometres above the Arctic Circle, which is suffering from a climate-disaster trifecta of melting permafrost, rising seas and bigger storm surges. As White House press releases and video blogs pointed out, this was a historic trip – not only would Obama be the first sitting president to ever visit the Arctic, but he would also be the first president to use a selfie stick to take videos of himself talking about the end of human civilisation.

The president’s upbeat mood was an odd and unexpected counterpoint to the seriousness and urgency of the message he was trying to deliver. “Climate change is no longer some far-off problem; it is happening here, it is happening now,” Obama said in his remarks to an international conference on the Arctic in Anchorage on the first day of his trip. In perhaps the starkest language he has ever used in public, Obama warned that unless more was done to reduce carbon pollution, “we will condemn our children to a planet beyond their capacity to repair: submerged countries, abandoned cities, fields no longer growing.” His impatience was obvious: “We’re not moving fast enough,” he repeated four times in a 24-minute speech (an aide later told me this repetition was ad-libbed).

Obama’s trip to Alaska marked the beginning of what may be the last big push of his presidency – to build momentum for a meaningful deal at the international climate talks in Paris later this year. “The president is entirely focused on this goal,” one of his aides told me in Alaska. For Obama, who has secured his legacy on his two top priorities, health care

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and the economy, as well as on important issues like gay marriage and immigration, a breakthrough in Paris would be a sweet final victory before his presidency drowns in the noise of the 2016 election. “If you think about who has been in the forefront of pushing global climate action forward, nobody is in Obama’s league,” says John Podesta, a former special adviser to Obama who is now chairing Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. (One recent visitor to the Oval Office recalled Obama saying, “I’m dragging the world behind me to Paris.”)

Policywise, the president didn’t have much to offer in Alaska. He restored the original Alaska Native name to the highest mountain in North America (Denali), accelerated the construction of a new U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker, doled out a few million bucks to help Alaska Native villages move to higher ground – largely symbolic gestures that didn’t do much to help Alaskans deal with the fact that their state is melting like a popsicle on a summer sidewalk. In the end, the trip was mostly a calculated and well-crafted presidential publicity stunt. And it raised the question: If the American people see the president of the United States standing atop a melting glacier and telling them the world is in trouble, will they care?

“Part of the reason why I wanted to take this trip was to start making it a lit-

tle more visceral and to highlight for people that this is not a distant problem that we can keep putting off,” the president told me. “This is something that we have to tackle right now.”

Obama could not have picked a better place to make his point than Alaska. Climate-wise, it is the dark heart of the fossil-fuel beast. On one hand, temperatures in the state are rising twice as fast as the American average, and glaciers are retreating so quickly that even the pilot of my Delta flight into Anchorage told passengers to “look out the window at the glaciers on the left side of the aircraft – they won’t be there for long!” The very week of Obama’s visit, 35,000 walrus huddled on the beach in northern Alaska because the sea ice they used as resting spots while hunting had melted away; in the Gulf of Alaska, scientists were tracking the effects of a zone of anomalously warm water that stretches down to Baja California and which has been named, appropriately enough, “the blob”. On the other hand, the state is almost entirely dependent on revenues from fossil-fuel production, which, thanks to the low price of oil and exhausted oil and gas wells on the North Slope, are in free fall – the state is grappling with a \$3.7 billion budget shortage this year. Alaska Gov. Bill Walker had flown from Washington, D.C., to Anchorage with the president at the beginning of his trip; according to one of the president’s aides, Walker asked the president to open more federal

lands to oil and gas drilling to boost state revenues. “Alaska is a banana republic,” says Bob Shavelson, executive director of Cook Inletkeeper, an environmental group in Alaska. “The state has to pump oil or die.”

When it comes to climate change, the rap on Obama has always been that he’s better at talk than action. He campaigned in 2008 on a promise to cut carbon pollution and push cap-and-trade legislation through Congress, but his commitment lacked urgency. (During the 2008 campaign, he went out of

his way to support “clean coal”, which was the favourite buzzword of Big Coal and political shorthand for “Don’t worry, Midwestern voters, I’m not really serious about this climate-change stuff.”) The year he took office, he brokered a last-minute deal at the Copenhagen climate negotiations, but decided to make health care reform, not climate legislation, his top priority in the first term. With the economy faltering, he pushed through an \$800 billion

“I don’t want to get paralysed by the magnitude of this thing. I’m a big believer that imagination can solve problems.”

stimulus bill that jump-started the clean-tech revolution in America, financing investment in wind, solar and other forms of renewable energy. And he used the leverage he gained during the federal bailout of the auto industry to double fuel-efficiency standards for vehicles. But after the 2010 midterm elections, the president had to deal with a Republican Congress full of rabid climate deniers. Rather than confront them and use his bully pulpit to build political momentum for action on climate change, he essentially went dark on the issue for the rest of his first term.

That changed in the second term. "I think his 2013 inaugural address was a turning point," says the president's senior adviser Brian Deese. "He wrote it more or less himself, without policy people, and it really marks a change in his thinking." In that address, Obama makes the case for immediate action: "We, the people,

Clean Power Plan, which will use the Environmental Protection Agency's regulatory authority to cut power-plant CO₂ emissions by 32 per cent by 2030.

Nearly all of Obama's policies have focused on reducing demand for fossil fuels; when it comes to shutting down supply, he has been far less ambitious. He has expanded drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, allowed fracking for natural gas, sold coal leases in Wyoming at flea-market prices and still has not officially killed the controversial Keystone pipeline. This reflects a seemingly deliberate philosophy that reducing demand is a more effective way to wean our economy off fossil fuels than shutting off supplies – which, in a global market, will just be provided elsewhere. Just a month before the trip began, the Department of the Interior approved a permit to allow Shell to perform exploratory drilling this summer about 120 kilo-

along, including Deese and Susan Rice, his national-security adviser.

Rice's presence on the trip was a reminder that a rapidly melting Arctic also has rapidly escalating national-security implications. As the ice vanishes, a whole new ocean is opening up – and one that contains 30 per cent of the known natural-gas reserves and 13 per cent of the oil. Unlike Russia, the U.S. is poorly equipped to operate up there, with only two icebreakers (the Russians have 40). And the Russians aren't the only ones with eyes on the Arctic – as we were flying toward Kotzebue, five Chinese warships were cruising in international waters below. Coincidence or power play? And off to the east, the Canadian military had just wrapped up Operation Nanook, an annual large-scale military exercise, which, according to the Canadian government, was "to assert sovereignty over its northernmost regions".



Northern Exposure

Far left: Well-wishers greet Obama in Anchorage, Alaska, on August 31st. Left: Obama, holding a puppy while meeting an Iditarod champion, is the first sitting president to visit the Arctic. "Part of the reason I wanted to take this trip was to make [climate change] more visceral," he says. "We have to tackle this now."

still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations."

And he made good on that. In June 2013, he unveiled a detailed 75-point Climate Action Plan, which essentially re-directed the entire federal government to begin taking climate change seriously. With the help of Podesta, whom he brought in as a senior adviser in early 2014, Obama launched a series of executive actions that circumvented Congress but still allowed him to demonstrate that he was serious about cutting America's carbon pollution. Just as important, he cut a deal with China to reduce carbon pollution in both countries, which broke the logjam on international politics and removed one of the major talking points against taking stronger action on climate change ("China isn't doing anything, so why should we?"). Finally, earlier this year he introduced the

metres off the coast of Alaska in the Chukchi Sea. White House officials argued that approving the drilling was hardly a sign that the president was unserious about climate change and pointed out, accurately, that the lease had been sold years earlier by the Bush administration, that there are already some 30 exploratory wells drilled in the Arctic, that the Department of the Interior had only approved this one after pushing hard for new safety regulations and environmental protections, and that, even if all went well, Shell wouldn't begin pumping oil for at least a decade. Nevertheless, climate activists blasted the president for hypocrisy; Al Gore called Arctic drilling "insane".

For the flight up to Kotzebue, the Air Force left the president's 747 parked on the tarmac in Anchorage and switched to a smaller plane, a 757 (it was also dubbed Air Force One, which applies to any aircraft the president is flying in – his staff called it "mini-Air Force One"). Several members of Obama's senior staff were

Before we crossed into the Arctic, we touched down in Dillingham, a small town on Bristol Bay that is the heart of the salmon fishery in Alaska. The presidential motorcade headed straight for the beach, where a couple of Alaska Native women had caught silver salmon in a net, which made another nice visual tableaux for the president's social-media feed and gave him a chance to talk briefly about the importance of salmon in Alaska's economy. (However, he managed to avoid addressing the Pebble mine, a massive and controversial gold and copper mine that is seeking permits in Alaska courts and that, if built, would destroy the headwaters of the salmon fishery.) The funniest moment of the entire trip occurred when the president, who was wearing orange rubber gloves, held up a two-foot-long silver salmon that a fisherwoman had given him. The salmon, apparently a male and still very much alive, ejaculated on his shoes. Obama laughed, and the fisherwoman said something privately to him.

The president laughed again and repeated her remark loud enough for everyone to hear: "She says he's happy to see me."

Next stop, Kotzebue. On the way, the president decided to circle over the island of Kivalina to have a look at it. Kivalina is the poster child for the havoc that climate change is wreaking on Alaska Native villages along the coast, where the thawing permafrost is destabilising the soil, causing houses to collapse and allowing the rising sea to wash the island away. About 400 people live on Kivalina, and their way of life is doomed – relocating the village to higher ground on the mainland will cost an estimated \$100 million, which, so far, neither the state nor the federal government has been willing to pay for. And Kivalina is just one of a dozen or so communities that are at immediate risk on the Alaska coast.

We touched down in Kotzebue (population 3,200) at about 5 p.m. The president was greeted on the tarmac by Reggie Joule, the mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough, then we climbed into our assigned vehicles in the motorcade for the short drive to the high school. We rolled by flimsy weather-beaten houses with American flags hanging in the windows and broken dog sleds in the front yards. You could sense the hardship of life in a place where it gets down to 37 degrees below zero (including wind chill) in the long, dark winters and where the nearest road to civilisation is 720 kilometres away. About 275 kilometres to the west, across the Bering Strait, is Russia.

The motorcade pulled up at Kotzebue High School, a large metal building draped with banners welcoming the president and snipers pacing on the roof. A thousand people crowded into the gym, draped with the blue and gold colours of the Kotzebue Huskies. Obama gave a relaxed speech about climate change and the wonders of the far north, clearly enjoying the fact that history would remember him as the first sitting president to visit the Arctic. He said he was envious that Warren Harding spent two weeks in Alaska during a trip in 1923, but then explained that he had to get back quickly because "I can't leave Congress alone that long."

When it was over, a White House aide guided me into a nearly empty classroom with a large round table in the centre and two blue plastic chairs. Ice crystals made from blue construction paper hung from the ceiling, and a Secret Service officer

kept watch by the door. Then the president walked in. We shook hands, exchanged a few words about the flight, then Obama sat down in one of the plastic chairs and said, "Let's do it." We talked for more than an hour – the cheerfulness that had animated many of his public remarks on this trip dissipated. He spoke in measured tones, but with a seriousness that suggested that he believed – not unjustifiably – that the fate of human civilisation was in his hands. Only near the end, when I asked if he felt any sadness about what we are losing in the world as a result of our rapidly changing climate, did he show any emotion – he averted his eyes for a moment and looked away, as if the knowledge of what's coming in the next few decades was almost too much to bear.

So let's start at the beginning. In 2008, on the day you received the nomination for president, you said, "I am absolutely certain that generations from now, we will be able to look back and tell our children... this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal." It's been seven years now. How do you feel about the progress you've made?

Well, I'll leave it to others to give a report card on myself. I'll say that, collectively, we have made modest progress, but nowhere near what we need to do.

In the United States, we had an early defeat when we couldn't get congressional passage of a cap-and-trade bill. And we saw Republicans who, in some cases, had previously supported cap-and-trade suddenly run the other way. And so we had to find another way to skin the cat.

And we started with the clean-energy investments that we made early on through the Recovery Act, the work that was done in conjunction with the automakers – in part, frankly, because we were helping them out a lot during that phase – to double fuel-efficiency standards and to look at what we could do administratively in terms of regulatory standards

that would create greater efficiency.

And Copenhagen, although it was a disorganised mess – and I still remember flying in that last day, and nothing was happening, and I literally had to rescue the entire enterprise by crashing a meeting of the BRIC countries [Brazil, Russia, India and China] and strong-arming them into coming up with at least a document that could build some consensus going into the future.

What we were able to do was to establish the basic principle that it wasn't going to be enough just for the advanced countries to act – that China, India, others, despite having much lower per-capita carbon footprints, given the sheer size of their populations and how rapidly they were developing, were going to have to put some skin in the game as well.

So where does that leave us now? We set a 17 per cent target [for emissions reduction]; we are on track to meet that. We have doubled our production of clean energy – wind-energy production up threefold, solar up twentyfold. We've been able to grow the economy from the depths of the recession while emitting less carbon than we did. Our auto and truck regulations are on track. And the prospect of a real clean-energy economy is there on the horizon. It's achievable. And as I've said, we've been able to do that while creating millions of jobs and dropping the unemployment rate down. And none of the disasters that were predicted from our regulatory steps have taken place.

With the clean-power-plant rule, we are now doubling down. And I think it's fair to say that with the steps we've taken through the clean-power-plant rule to reduce carbon emissions from the single largest source by over 30 per cent, we've been able to establish a very aggressive target of 26 to 28 per cent carbon reduction. Probably as importantly, we've been able to lead by example in a way that allowed me to leverage China and President Xi to make their own commitments for the first time, to have a conversation with somebody like Prime Minister Modi of India or President Rousseff of Brazil, so that they put forward plans.

And I believe that when we get to Paris at the end of this year, we're now in a position for the first time to have all countries recognise their responsibilities to tackle the problem, and to have a meaningful set of targets as well as the financing required to help poor countries adapt. And if we're able to do that by the end of this year – and I'm cautiously optimistic – then we will at least have put together the framework, the architecture to move in concert over the next decade in a serious way.

But having said all that, the science keeps on telling us we're just not acting fast enough. My attitude, though, is that if we get the structure right, then we can turn the dials as there's additional public education, not just in the United States but across the world, and people feel a greater urgency about it and there's more political will to act.

Here in Alaska, you talked in almost apocalyptic terms about the future we face if we don't cut carbon pollution quickly. But at the same time, you recently approved a new round of drilling in the Arctic here. How do you justify that decision?

“Copenhagen was a mess. I literally had to rescue the entire enterprise by strong-arming them into coming up with a document.”



Catch of the Day

Getting a fishing tutorial from the locals in Dillingham. “We’ve been having conversations with Alaska Natives who are seeing their way of life impacted adversely,” Obama says.

This has been an ongoing conversation that I’ve had with the environmental community. One of the things about being president is you’re never starting from scratch, you’ve got all these legacies that you wrestle with. And obviously, the fossil-fuel economy is deeply entrenched in the structure of everybody’s lives around the world. And so from the start, I’ve always talked about a transition that is not going to happen overnight.

And regardless of how urgent I think the science is, if I howl at the moon without being able to build a political consensus behind me, it’s not going to get done. And in fact, we end up potentially marginalising supporters or people who recognise there’s a need to act but also have some real interests at stake.

Alaska, I think, is a fascinating example of that. We’ve been having conversations with Alaska Natives who are seeing their way of life impacted adversely because of climate change, but also have a real interest in generating jobs and economic development in depressed areas. And so they’ll talk to me about climate change and in the same breath say, “By the way, we really are looking to use our natural resources in a way that can spur on economic development.” And that’s just a microcosm of what’s true across America and what’s true around the world.

So my strategy has been to use every lever that we have available to move the

clean-energy agenda forward faster, which then reduces the costs of transition for everybody – in fact, in many cases, saves people money and saves businesses money – so that we’re reducing what is perceived as a contradiction between economic development and saving the planet.

And when it comes to our own fossil-fuel production, what I’ve said is there’re some things we’re just not going to do, not only because it’s bad for the climate, but it’s also bad for the environment or too risky – Bristol Bay, where we went to earlier today, being a prime example where we just took out the possibility of oil and gas drilling around the Aleutians in ways that would threaten Bristol Bay. Same thing up north.

But to say that, knowing there’s still going to be some energy production taking place, let’s find those areas that are going to be least likely to disturb precious ecosystems, and let’s raise the standards – meaning making them more costly – but not shut them off completely, and that allows me then to have a conversation not with folks who are climate deniers, and not with folks who are adamant about their right to drill, explore and extract anywhere, anytime, but with those folks who are of two minds about the issue.

And I think that process is something that we have to take into account even when something is really important. Even when something threatens us all, we have

to bring everybody along. We had the same discussion around something like fracking. The science tells us that if done properly, fracking risks can be minimised. And natural gas is a fossil fuel, but the reason we’re not seeing coal-fired plants being built in the United States is not just because of the clean-power-plant rule – because we just put that in place. The reason is it wasn’t economical because natural gas was so cheap. And we have to make those choices.

Nuclear energy – we approved a nuclear plant down South. And there are some environmentalists who don’t like that either. But while acknowledging the risks that we saw in Fukushima, we also have to acknowledge that if we’re going to solve climate change, energy is going to have to come from somewhere for a lot of these countries.

So there’s always this balance. And I see this even in other issues. When I came into office, I was clear about wanting to end “don’t ask, don’t tell”. A lot of people said, “Well, why not just end it right away?” And I took two years to build a consensus within the Pentagon so that by the time we actually ended it, it was something that had the support of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that made it a lot easier to get done.

The problem, of course, is that building consensus on climate change is different than other issues because you have physics to account for too, right? The warming of the planet is not waiting for consensus-building.

I understand. But if we’re going to get our arms around this problem, which I think we can, then we are going to have to take into account the fact that the average American right now, even if they’ve gotten past climate denial, is still much more concerned about gas prices, getting back and forth from work, than they are about the climate changing. And if we are not strategic about how we talk about the issue and work with all the various stakeholders on this issue, then what will happen is that this will be demagogued and we will find ourselves in a place where we actually have slower progress rather than faster progress.

So the science doesn’t change. The urgency doesn’t change. But part of my job is to figure out what’s my fastest way to get from point A to point B – what’s the best way for us to get to a point where we’ve got a clean-energy economy. And somebody who is not involved in politics may say, “Well, the shortest line between two points is just a straight line; let’s just go straight to it.” Well, unfortunately, in a democracy, I may have to zig and zag occasionally, and take into account very real concerns and interests.

I think one of the failures that we had in the cap-and-trade legislation that came up



early in my first term was we were doing so many things at that time. People's minds were overwhelmingly focused on economic recovery and getting people back to work – and rightly so – that for a member of Congress who might care about climate change, but was seeing massive job loss, and comes from an industrial state where the [cost of] transition is going to be really high to go from dirty energy to clean energy – casting a vote like that just didn't seem to be a priority. And we hadn't built enough of the consensus that was required to get that done.

Do you have any regrets about how you handled that cap-and-trade legislation in your first term? It passed the House, and many people think that with a little more muscle, you could have gotten it through the Senate.

Look, I think that our democratic process is painfully slow – even when you've got Democratic majorities. And this is an issue that, although overwhelmingly Democrats are on the right side of, it's not easy for every Democrat, and it's not uniform. And when you've got a filibuster in the Senate, you've got challenges.

I think the biggest problem we had was folks like John McCain, who had come out in favour of a cap-and-trade system, getting caught up in a feverish opposition to anything I proposed and reversing themselves – which meant that getting the numbers that we needed was

Racing the Clock

Visiting Exit Glacier, which has retreated 1.6 kms in 200 years. "The complete scepticism you had around [climate change] science, I think, has been overwhelmed," Obama says.

going to be too difficult. And we probably should have moved faster to a nonlegislative strategy, but I don't think that there was some magic recipe whereby we could have gotten cap-and-trade through the Senate without some Republican support. We needed 60 votes. That's the way the filibuster operates there.

This is similar to the discussions I have with progressives sometimes when they say, "Why didn't you have a trillion-dollar stimulus instead of an \$800 billion stimulus?" And you try to explain, well, this was significantly larger than the New Deal; it was the largest stimulus ever, but I had to get the votes of a couple of Republicans in order to get it done. Or folks who want single-payer health care instead of Obamacare. We had political constraints.

Now, what this tells us, generally, is that those who, rightly, see this as the issue of our time have to take politics into account and have to be strategic in terms of how we frame the issues, and we have to make sure that we're bringing the public along with us. There's been good work done in terms of public education over the last several

years. I think surveys show that the American people understand this is an urgent problem. But it isn't yet at the point where they consider it the most important problem, and it's not even close.

Al Gore once told me that he thinks that everyone who cares deeply about climate change has had what he called an "oh, shit" moment when they realised what's at stake. What was your "oh, shit" moment?

Well, I did grow up in Hawaii. And the way that you grow up in Hawaii is probably surprisingly similar to the way some folks grew up here in the Arctic Circle. There are traditions that are very close to the land – in Hawaii, the water – and you have an intimate awareness of how fragile ecosystems can be. There are coral reefs in Hawaii that, when I was growing up, were lush and full of fish, that now, if you go back, are not.

And so I don't think that there was a eureka moment. In my early speeches in 2007-2008, we were already talking about this and making it a prominent issue. What's happened during my presidency is each time I get a scientific report, I'm made aware that we have less time than we thought, that this is happening faster than we thought. And what that does for me is to say that we have to ring the alarm louder, faster. But, as I said, the good news is that the kind of complete scepticism you had around the science that you saw even two or three years ago, I think, has been so

overwhelmed – that we kind of cleared out that underbrush.

The next argument that was being made – and a lot of Republicans have continued to make – is the notion that, well, even if it is a problem, there's no point in us doing something because China won't do something about it. And my trip to China and the joint announcement, I think, was critical in puncturing that notion.

Every so often, John Holdren, the head of my science advisory group, sends out the latest data, and I make sure that not only me but my entire senior staff read it. And the last few reports have gotten everybody feeling like we've got to get moving on this, and to see what kinds of tools we can use to really have an impact.

So that brings us back to politics. Obviously one of the biggest sort of impediments to moving faster is the oil cartels – especially the Koch brothers. They're oil billionaires who are doing everything they can to slow the transition to clean energy. You recently singled out Charles Koch for fighting subsidies for clean energy, saying, "That's not the American way." What did you mean by that?

Well, it wasn't just that they were trying to eliminate solar subsidies – that's the spin they put on it after I made those remarks down in Nevada – they are actually trying to influence state utilities to make it more expensive for homeowners to install solar panels. And my point was, that's not how the market works. And by the way, they're also happy to take continued massive subsidies that Congress has refused to eliminate, despite me calling for the elimination of those subsidies every single year.

Everybody is very selective when they start talking about free-market principles and innovation and entrepreneurship. And it seems as if – and I don't necessarily need to single out the Koch brothers, I think that this is true for a lot of folks in the traditional energy industries – they're fine with sweetheart deals and cushy subsidies for their mature, well-established industries, but somehow when it comes to developing clean energy, they're not simply opposing subsidies, they're actually actively trying to keep competitors out.

And what's been fascinating is the coalition that you're now seeing between the green movement and some members of the Tea Party in some states, saying, leave us alone. If we want to set up a solar panel or change how energy is distributed, and to reorganise the traditional power grid in a way that is more efficient, saves people money and is more environmentally sound, that's something that government should support. That's not something that government should be trying to impede.

Let's talk about the Arctic. The Russian deputy prime minister recently called the Arctic "Russia's Mecca". And there's a lot of talk about Russian operations here,

military buildup and a new Cold War brewing. How do you read Russia's intentions up here?

So far, Russia has been a constructive partner in the Arctic Council and has participated with the other Arctic nations in ways that are consistent with the rule of law and a sensible approach to the changes that are taking place in the Arctic. Given that much more of their country and their economy is up north, it's not surprising that they see more opportunities and are more focused on a day-to-day basis on what's taking place here than Washington has been.

But part of the reason that I wanted to come here is that needs to change. The icebreaker announcement was just a concrete example of the need for policymakers, starting from the president on down, to be mindful that this area is changing and is changing faster than policymakers thought it was going to 10 years ago, or five years ago, or last year.

So we're going to have to have more resources up here. I think that we have to work with other countries, including Russia, to establish some clear rules of the road so we don't start seeing some of the same kinds of problems that we've been seeing in the South China Sea around maritime rules and borders and boundaries. I think that's achievable. Obviously we've got big differences with the Russians on other issues. But as we've seen in the discussions with Iran, there is the ability to compartmentalise some of these issues so that even as we have very fierce disagreements with Russia on Ukraine, there remain areas where we should be able to work constructively together.

One thing that I am concerned about is, as a major oil producer, Russia may not be as concerned about climate change as they need to be. And if we've got problems with public opinion in the United States, I think it's fair to say that those problems are bigger in a country like Russia. And so constantly engaging with them around the science and making it clear that there is an upside for them in navigation and commerce, but there are massive downsides for them as well – as we've witnessed in the biggest fires that they've seen in years recently – that is a conversation that we've got to have on an ongoing basis.

You've talked increasingly about climate change as a national-security issue. How would you compare the challenges and the risk to America's security regard-

ing climate change to, say, ISIS or, for that matter, Iran?

Well, they're different. And as president and commander in chief, I don't have the luxury of selecting one issue versus the other. They're all major problems. What we know about climate change, though, is that with increasing drought, increasing floods, increasing erosion of coastlines, that's going to impact agriculture; it's going to increase scarcity in parts of the world; it is going to result in displacement of large numbers of people.

The people who live on the island [Kivalina] that we flew over today can move. It's painful for those residents, but it can be done. If the monsoon patterns in South Asia change, you can't move tens of millions of people without the possibilities of refugees, conflict. And the messier the world gets, the more national-security problems we have. In fact, there have been arguments that, for example, what's happening in Syria partly resulted from record drought that led huge numbers of folks off farms and the fields into the cities in Syria, and created a political climate

that led to protests that Assad then responded to in the most vicious ways possible.

But that's the kind of national-security challenge that we're looking at with climate change. It will manifest itself in different ways, but what we know from human history is that when large populations are put under severe strain, then they react badly. And that can be expressed in terms of nationalism; it can be expressed in terms of war; it can be expressed in terms of xenophobia and nativism; it can be expressed

in terms of terrorism. But the whole package is one that we should be wanting to avoid, if at all possible.

The Paris climate talks that are coming up in December are a big focus of your attention right now, and may be the last best chance for the world to come together and actually do something to slow climate change. How will you define success in Paris?

For us to be able to get the basic architecture in place with aggressive-enough targets from the major emitters that the smaller countries say, "This is serious" – that will be a success.

I'm less concerned about the precise number, because let's stipulate right now, whatever various country targets are, it's still going to fall short of what the science requires. So a per cent here or a per cent

“Each time I get a scientific report, I’m made aware that this is happening faster than we thought. We have to ring the alarm louder.”

there coming from various countries is not going to be a deal-breaker. But making sure everybody is making serious efforts and that we are making a joint international commitment that is well-defined and can be measured will create the basis for us each year, then, to evaluate, "How are we doing?" and will allow us, five years from now, to say the science is new, we need to ratchet it up, and by the way, because of the research and development that we've put in, we can achieve more ambitious goals.

You think about when I started, we thought we were setting a really bold goal with our plans for solar-power production. And if you had told me in 2007-2008 that the costs for solar would have dropped as much as they have, even Steve Chu, my then-energy secretary, would have told you that's a little crazy. But it has. And I think just last year, costs were down 10 to 20 per cent, depending on the region. So human ingenuity, when focused and targeted, can achieve amazing things.

And the key for Paris is just to make sure that everybody is locked in, saying, "We're going to do this." Once we get to that point, then we can turn the dials. But there will be a momentum that is built, and I'm confident that we will then be in a position to listen more carefully to the science - partly because people, I think, will be not as fearful of the consequences or as cynical about what can be achieved. Hope builds on itself. Success breeds success.

When you talk about capitalism, that reminds me of the pope, who is speaking out about climate change and is trying to build momentum for the Paris talks.

I really like the pope.

Personally?

Yes, he's a good man. And he's on the right side of a lot of stuff.

In the encyclical, the pope talks about what he calls the "myth of progress". And he basically argues that greed and materialism are destroying the planet. How do you interpret that idea? Do you think that dealing with climate change is ultimately going to require rethinking the basic tenets of capitalism?

If you look at human history, it is indisputable that market-based systems have produced more wealth than any other system in human history by a factor of - you choose the number. And that has been, net, a force for good.

In our own lives, you think about the changes in the standard of living that have taken place here in the United States. Then you think about hundreds of millions of people who have been lifted out of poverty in China or in India - and you can't scoff at that. If a child has enough food to eat, if they have medicine that prevents deadly diseases, if people have a roof over their heads and can afford to send their kids to school, that is part of justice

and part of my ethics. And so I think a broadside against the entire market-based system would be a mistake.

What I do think is true is that mindless free-market ideologies that ignore the externalities that any capitalist system produces can cause massive problems. And it's the job of governments and societies to round the edges and to address big system failures. That, by the way, is not controversial among market economists. There are a whole bunch of concepts involved in that that you can open up in any standard economic textbook in the United States or anywhere else in the world. And pollution has always been the classic market failure, where externalities are not captured and the system doesn't deal with them, even though it's having an impact on everybody.

So our goal here has to be to say that climate change is a major market failure, just like smog in Los Angeles was back in the Sixties and Seventies, just like the problems with polluted waters were in the Cuyahoga River.

And just as we were able to use the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act to clean up those waters and to clean up that air, just as we were able to solve the acid-rain problem and the growing problem with ozone with some smart regulations, we can do that with climate change.

The difference is that those previous pollution problems were more or less localised, and you weren't seeing the possibility of a global feedback loop that tips us over the edge. So there is a race against time here that we haven't seen before, but the nature of the problem is not that different.

And I think that the way we solve any big market failure is to have a broad-based conversation and to come to a collective agreement that this is something we're going to take into account in our day-to-day doing business. And when we do that, businesses will find ways to profit from it, jobs will be created. We're already seeing that when it comes to the solar industry. We're seeing that when it comes to the wind industry. And we're seeing that consumers are interested in saving money and using less electricity.

So I am optimistic about us being able to solve this problem. But it is going to require that our politics catches up with the facts. And right now, in this country, our politics is going through a particularly broken period - Congress has trouble passing a transportation bill, much less

solving big problems like this. That's part of the reason why we're having to do so much action, administratively. And that's part of the reason why I took this trip.

Historically, politics catch up when the public cares deeply. And when people couldn't breathe in L.A., the state of California starts saying, "You've got to get catalytic converters." When the river catches fire in Cuyahoga, the people of Ohio and, eventually, the people nationally, say, "That's getting kind of out of hand."

You're the leader of the world's largest economy, as well as one of the world's biggest polluters. How do you handle this responsibility of avoiding a potential catastrophe of unimaginable dimensions that will affect all of humanity - and within your daughters' lifetimes?

I think about it a lot. I think about Malia and Sasha a lot. I think about their children a lot.

One of the great things about being president is you travel a lot and you get

to see the world's wonders from a vantage point that very few people get a chance to see. When we were out on the water yesterday, going around those fjords, and the sea otter was swimming on its back and feeding off its belly, and a porpoise jumps out of the water, and a whale sprays - I thought to myself, "I want to make sure my grandchildren see this."

We go back to Hawaii every year, and I intend to, hopefully, spend a lot of time there when I'm out of office. I want to make sure my kids, when they go snorkelling, are

seeing the same things that I saw when I went snorkelling when I was five years old, or eight years old. I spent a big chunk of my life in Indonesia when I was young, and I want them to be able to have some of the same experiences, walking through a forest and suddenly seeing an ancient temple. And I don't want that gone.

And so it's probably less of a function of being president, more a function of age [laughs] when you start thinking about what you're leaving behind. One of the books I read during vacation was *The Sixth Extinction*, by Elizabeth Kolbert. And it's a wonderful book, and it makes very clear that big, abrupt changes can happen; they're not outside the realm of possibility. They have happened before, they can happen again.

So all of this makes me feel that I have to tackle this every way that I can. But one of the things about being president is you're also mindful that, despite the office,

"I think about Malia and Sasha," Obama says. "I want to make sure my kids, when we snorkel in Hawaii, see the same things I saw."

you don't do things alone. So we've made big strides with the power-plant rule, but that's not enough. We've doubled fuel-efficiency standards, but that's not enough. We should triple our investment in energy R&D. I can't do that without Congress.

So that's why I continually go back to the notion that the American people have to feel the same urgency that I do. And it's understandable that they don't, because the science right now feels abstract to people. It will feel less abstract with each successive year. I suspect that the record wildfires that we're seeing, the fact that half of the West is in extreme or severe drought right now, is making people understand this better. If you talk to people in Washington state right now, I suspect, after having tragically lost three firefighters, and seeing vast parts of their state aflame, that they understand it better. If you go down to Florida, and neighbourhoods that are now flooding every time the tide rises, they're understanding it better.

And part of what's happening is a recognition that it is going to be cheaper to take action than not. That's one of the hardest things in politics to convince people of: to make investments today that don't pay off until many years from now.

But what's now happening – and that's part of what I've been trying to highlight – is that the costs are starting to accrue right now. We're spending about a billion dollars a year on firefighting, and the fire season extends now about two and a half months longer than it did just a few decades ago. And that's money that could be spent on schools. That's money that could be spent on fixing roads. That's money that people could spend in their own households.

When you look at the changes people are having to make in California in their own lives, and farmers now suddenly realise we're going to have to entirely change how we think about irrigation, well, that's an investment that they're going to have to make.

So we're getting to the point now where we can start attaching dollars and cents to climate change in a way that might not have been true a decade ago – or at least the link might have not been as clear. And that's an opportunity.

You wish that the political system could process an issue like this just based on obscure data and science, but, unfortunately, our system doesn't process things that way. People have to see it and feel it and breathe it. And that makes things a little scarier, because it indicates that we're already losing a lot of time. But, potentially, it gives us the chance to build the kind of political consensus, not just in America but internationally, that's going to be necessary to solve this enormous problem.

But I want to end on an optimistic note. The technologies are there. We'll need more to close the gap entirely, but using

what we know right now and what we have right now, we can make huge strides just in the next 20 years. And that 20 years, if we're investing enough in R&D, allows us then to make the next leap forward. And there's a way of doing it that will be compatible with growth, jobs, economic development.

I think it's important for us not to pretend that there are no difficult trade-offs at all. The transition will require some tough choices to be made. There are going to be localised impacts for folks who have more of a legacy system of dirty energy. We can accommodate helping those communities transition, but it requires us to feel like we're all in this together.

It's not enough for environmentalists who are distantly removed from an aging coal town in West Virginia to just say, "Stop it." And it's not enough to say to a state like Alaska, "Cut it out because we think your state is beautiful." We've got to be in there talking to folks about how do we solve some of the technical problems involved; how do we make sure that everybody is benefiting from this transition; and if there are costs involved in this transition, how do we all pull together to make sure that it's not just being borne by one group of people.

And that's true internationally as well. I can't have a conversation with the prime minister of India and ignore the fact that they still have hundreds of millions of people in poverty and not enough electricity. So if I'm going to get him to have an aggressive plan to keep emissions down, then I've got to be willing to pony up strategies for power that aren't polluting. And some of that may require technology transfers or help to modernise their systems to make them more efficient.


When we were hiking at the glacier in Seward the other day, one of the rangers who works for the park said that more and more people are making pilgrimages to see the glacier before it vanishes. Some people even kiss it goodbye. And she said there's a sadness in a lot of the people who go there because they know the world is changing so quickly as a result of climate change. Do you ever feel sadness about what we, as human beings, for better or for worse, knowingly and unknowingly, are doing to the planet?

There are some amazing, beautiful things in this world that aren't coming back. And that should give us all pause. But I don't wallow in sadness, because we've got too much work to do. The world is always changing, and there are going to be changes in our lifetime that I wish hadn't happened. There are also changes that have eradicated polio, and changes that have reduced infant mortality. And those we celebrate.

So there are some things that I've experienced and seen that I suspect my grand-

children won't, and that's a sad thing. But the world is full of wonders, and I figure that we still have time to save most of them. And our kids will probably discover some new ones.

AFTER THE FORMAL INTERVIEW ended, the president and I walked along the sea wall across the street from the high school, which was built to hold back the rising waters of Kotzebue Bay (and which was, ironically, constructed in part with federal dollars from Obama's stimulus plan). The bay was grey and flat, and even though it was only early September, you could already feel winter approaching. The two biggest take-aways from my time with the president were these: First, he is laser-focused on the Paris climate talks and is playing a multidimensional chess game with other nations to build alliances and cut deals to reach a meaningful agreement later this year. Second, whatever deals he cuts, it won't be enough. On this trip, I witnessed all the trappings of presidential power – the jets, the helicopters, the Secret Service agents, the obsequiousness of local politicians. But given the scale of this problem, given the fact that what we need to do is nothing less than reinvent the infrastructure of modern life, even a president as committed and shrewd as Obama can only move us a few steps in the right direction. This is a long war, with everything at stake. "I do what I can do and as much as I can do," the president told me as we walked along Kotzebue Bay. "What I don't want to do is get paralysed by the magnitude of the thing, and what I don't want is for people to get paralysed thinking that somehow this is out of our control. And I'm a big believer that the human imagination can solve problems. We don't usually solve them as fast as we need to. It's sort of like two cheers for democracy. We try everything else, I think Churchill said, and when we've exhausted every other alternative, we finally do the right thing. Hopefully, the same will be true here."

We walked a few hundred metres, then Obama stopped to chat with 2011 Iditarod champion John Baker. The president scooped up a sled-dog puppy to hold and was given a baseball cap to take home. At about 8:30 p.m., we motorcaded back to the airport and the president bounded up the steps to Air Force One. A small group of Alaskans waved at him from behind a chain-link fence and shouted good-byes. He had been in the Arctic for about four hours – but that was four hours more than any other president had done. As I took my seat on Air Force One, the president was already in his leather chair at the conference table on the plane, still wearing his Iditarod hat. He said to his staff, "Let's get to work." 



PUTIN'S ANGELS THE RIDE OF RUSSIA'S NIGHT WOLVES

BY DAMON TABOR

The country's largest motorcycle gang is backed by the Kremlin, fighting in Ukraine and hellbent on restoring the empire

THE WILD ONE
The Surgeon,
leader of the club,
in Moscow in May



The president of Russia's most infamous motorcycle club emerges

from a purifying swim in the still waters of a former slurry pond. He cuts a striking figure: tall, tattooed, plated with muscle. His hair, a leonine mane, clings to his back in dark ringlets. A silver crucifix dangles from his neck. "He goes to the lake, swimming for an hour, to maintain himself in a moral state," says one of his lieutenants, a stout, chain-smoking Kazakh named Arman.

The leader's name is the Surgeon, and he is the president of the Night Wolves, the largest motorcycle club in Russia. He is a busy man. Over the past week, he has been composing the script for the Night Wolves' signature event: an annual bike show held here in Sevastopol – a city on the coast of Russia's recently reacquired Crimean Peninsula – combining motorcycle stunts, military manoeuvres and strident nationalist pageantry. One evening, I was told, he also met with Argentina's vice president. Several weeks before that, he challenged a local lawmaker to a duel. The official had objected to a dubious government land deal that would rent a sprawling, defunct gravel factory, where the Night Wolves hold their bike show, at a 99.9 per cent discount. (The official declined the challenge.)

After his swim, the Surgeon strides over to a replica World War II fighter plane. A battle tank, imported from a film studio in Kazakhstan, sits parked nearby in the scrub grass. Both would be incorporated into the Night Wolves' bike show in several weeks – a phantasmagorical spectacle celebrating the Red Army's victory over Hitler and intended to feed Russia's growing Soviet nostalgia. "I'm very excited by the topic of war at the moment," the Surgeon

This is contributor DAMON TABOR'S first feature for Rolling Stone Australia.

says. "I'm not fucking interested in show just for show. I'm a warrior. I'm fighting for my country, for my history. I'm talking about what Russia is facing now. Especially America, putting the shit on it."

Above the Surgeon's head, a pair of outsize metal puppet hands hang from a rusted conveyor chute. They featured prominently in the previous year's show, wagging malevolently above the stage and appearing to orchestrate goose-stepping "pro-Western" demonstrators below – the Surgeon's reinterpretation of the 2014 Maidan revolution in Ukraine that toppled the pro-Russia president. The Surgeon's narrative echoed the Kremlin's own version of events: Ukrainian fascists overthrew a legitimate government, with secret Western backing, and installed a junta with villainous plans for ethnic Russians. One of the puppet hands had sported a ring, now absent, emblazoned with an eagle logo suspiciously similar to the U.S. presidential seal. "Not Americans," Arman assures me. "It's world evil, international evil."

"All this has meaning," says the Night Wolves' leader, a 52-year-old former dental surgeon whose real name is Alexander Zaldostanov, gazing around at the props of war. "All this is made by Night Wolves. All my vision, everything I have in my head, will be reflected here."

I had travelled to Russia in July to learn about the vision of the Surgeon and his fellow *Nochniye Volki*. A charismatic showman

with a penchant for provocative bombast, the motorcycle club's leader is perhaps Russia's most recognisable nationalist star. Over the past decade, he has transformed a once-underground biker gang into a self-styled vanguard of patriotic holy warriors, reportedly 5,000 strong, with close ties to the Kremlin. In the Russian media, he can regularly be heard trumpeting the country's greatness while warning that its enemies – America, Europe, homosexuals, liberals, traitorous "fifth columnists" – intend to undermine Mother Russia. He and the other Night Wolves often hold motorcycle rallies to promote Russian patriotism and Orthodox Christianity, making rumbling pilgrimages to churches and holy sites. He has vowed to defend the Kremlin from Maidan-inspired protesters and has pledged to die for Vladimir Putin, the country's president. He has famously declared that "wherever the Night Wolves are, that should be considered Russia". Recently, the club held a three-day anti-NATO rally in Slovakia. Lately, the Surgeon has taken to praising Stalin.

Western reporters have dubbed the Night Wolves either "Russia's Hells Angels" or, because of their muscular patriotism, a crucial source of "Russian soft power". But such descriptions fall short. In late February 2014, at the beginning of Russia's takeover of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, the Surgeon was spotted on a flight to Crimea. On the day of his arrival, the Night Wolves were working alongside pro-Russia militias, setting up roadblocks in Sevastopol. In March, according to the U.S. government, they stormed a naval facility, with the Surgeon personally helping to coordinate "the confiscation of Ukrainian weapons with the Russian forces". On March 18th, Russia formally annexed the peninsula. Whether the Night Wolves'

leader acted on his own initiative or on orders from Russian officials remains unknown, but it seems unlikely the Kremlin would not sanction, at least tacitly, an operation of such consequence. (The Surgeon soon received a medal for "the liberation of the Crimea and Sevastopol" in Moscow, Russian media reported.) After fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine weeks later, a Night Wolves chapter joined pro-Russia militias battling the country's army – a grinding conflict that continues and has killed nearly 8,000 thus far. The Night Wolves have been running "humanitarian convoys" into the region

**"I'M A WARRIOR,"
THE SURGEON
SAYS. "I'M
FIGHTING FOR
MY COUNTRY
AGAINST WHAT
WE FACE NOW.
ESPECIALLY
AMERICA."**



and, I witness, serving as a police force in Luhansk, one of two self-declared separatist republics.

“For the first time, we showed resistance to the global Satanism, the growing savagery of Western Europe, the rush to consumerism that denies all spirituality, the destruction of traditional values, all this homosexual talk, this American democracy,” the Surgeon proudly declared in March.

The gang’s rhetoric echoes both a growing wave of nationalism in Russia and a sharp rightward turn in the country’s politics. Under Putin’s tenure, the Kremlin has jailed journalists and opposition figures, banned “gay propaganda” and crafted ersatz political parties that provide a veneer of self-governance. It has deployed its vast propaganda apparatus – state-controlled radio and newspapers, but above all, television – to fan patriotic fervor. “Russia is like the Kingdom of the Crooked Mirrors,” a liberal Muscovite tells me over dinner one night, referring to a Soviet-era fairy tale in which a king uses warped looking glasses to brainwash his people.

The Surgeon and his Night Wolves have flourished in this nationalist ecosystem. The club has reportedly received more than \$1 million in grants from the Kremlin to support patriotic performances like the Sevastopol bike show. On sever-

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Vladimir Putin with the Surgeon in Moscow, 2009. The Kremlin has granted more than \$1 million to the club. In 2013, Putin awarded the Surgeon an Order of Honour for his “patriotic education of youth”.

al occasions, Putin himself has famously mounted a three-wheel Harley and ridden alongside the Surgeon. In 2013, Putin awarded the Night Wolves’ leader an Order of Honour for his “patriotic education of youth”. In June, the Russian press announced a cosmonaut would carry the club’s flag into space. Putin, according to Mark Galeotti, a Russia expert and NYU professor, turned the club into “auxiliaries of the state” as part of a broader push to turn potential adversaries into compliant allies. However true, these assertions shed little light on how a once-countercultural motorcycle gang has come to wield a position of such power and prominence in modern Russia – and, now set loose, what it hopes to achieve.

“We are the army of Russia,” the Surgeon tells me. But, he continues, “I don’t want to meet any foreigners, as they won’t write anything good.” (He had agreed to be interviewed, begrudgingly, only after a fel-

low member in Moscow provided a recommendation.) “I will always be bad in their eyes. I’m bad, I’m Putin’s gang – fuck it. But this gang is met with flowers. You will see how we will be welcomed in Sevastopol.”

The Surgeon trundles a golf cart toward a derelict four-storey concrete building – the local chapter’s headquarters – then disappears. He is due on a flight, business class, back to Moscow in two hours. Soon, the Night Wolves’ leader re-emerges in full biker regalia: black boots, black jeans, black vest bearing the club’s flaming wolf’s head emblem. Dmitry Simichein, the leader of the Sevastopol chapter, ushers the Surgeon into a tricked-out pickup truck, and we race toward the airport. As Simichein veers in and out of oncoming traffic, occasionally flicking on blue lights on the truck’s grille to bully slower cars from our path, I ask about Global Satan.

“The easiest example is the sexual-abuse escalator,” the Surgeon replies. “What was considered a sin before, pedophilia” – he means homosexuality – “now it’s legalised. They even allow them to take marriage in the Catholic Church! The priests are not just traitors, but Satanists themselves. When these marriages are allowed, tomorrow pedophilia will be fine, then sex with dead people, then eating the shit, and if we don’t stop, we will see the abyss of hell.”

Ten minutes from the airport, the truck's engine boils over. Simichein pulls off to the shoulder. In the West, the Surgeon has attained outlaw-pariah status – the U.S. recently placed him on its international sanctions list, citing the club's close ties to Russian special services and involvement in Ukraine's conflict – but to some Crimeans, apparently, he is a hero. A woman, along with her young daughter, immediately recognises our famous passenger. "Just look who is here!" she exclaims in Russian, hurrying over to the window. "Night Wolves! Surgeon!" Starstruck, the woman demands a memento. "It's not often I'm so lucky to have a photo with such a person," she gushes. Smiling gamely, the Surgeon poses with the pair. "We wish you all the health for your patriotism," the woman says before we depart. "From all people from Sevastopol, from Crimea!"



BORN OF MOSCOW'S ANARCHIC underground scene in the 1980s, the Night Wolves were originally a loose gathering of metalheads and bikers headquartered in the boiler room of a Moscow apartment building. President Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika policy had begun easing Soviet strictures: Western music, drugs and an ethos of counterculture rebelliousness were slipping into the capital. The group members relished the newfound freedom. They barrelled around Moscow in decrepit Soviet Dneprs and Czech Jawas. They hassled police and brawled with the "Lyubers", working-class bodybuilders from a nearby suburb. They partied to local rock bands. "We would get together every night, 50 to 100 motorcycles," Ed Ratnikov, a close friend of the Surgeon's from that era, told me. "Can you imagine? Traffic police would shit their pants."

The Night Wolves' early members included a musician, a mechanic and a massage therapist. Zaldostanov had a residency as a dental surgeon at a Moscow clinic and lived a double life – staying out all night, then climbing into the back window of the clinic to change from leathers to medical dress. (Roos Turin, another founding father of Moscow's early biker scene, says Zaldostanov originally wished to be called "the Dentist", but then deemed it insufficiently menacing.) Early on, the club provided security for local bands and ran protection rackets for black-market businesses hoping to avoid shakedowns from police and gangsters – an enterprise the Surgeon casts in benevolent terms.

"We were Robin Hoods," he says today. "Commercial activities started – numerous tiny shops, stores – and we were pro-



SURGEON RISING

(1) As a dental surgeon and biker in the late Eighties. (2) Leading the Night Wolves in Moscow in May. (3) Attending services at the Christ The Saviour Cathedral in Moscow. "I'm doing exactly what God saved me for," he says.



tecting them as our friends, but then it became the business. They wanted only Night Wolves to protect them, as we were the dons."

By the early 1990s, the Surgeon – who was charismatic and ambitious – had established himself as the Night Wolves' leader. He was considered the "king of the Moscow scene", according to Hilary Pilkington, a British sociologist who studied the city's counterculture. The Surgeon had been travelling between Moscow and West Berlin, where he found work as a

doorman at the Sexton, a legendary rock club in the city. He lived in a squat and soon married a German woman. (They later separated.) He revelled in the rowdy, unrestrained underground world of Berlin and learned about motorcycle culture from members of the local Hells Angels chapter. "He loved the feeling of freedom here," the Sexton's former owner recently told a reporter. "In his soul, he was punk." By chance, Vladimir Putin – future president of Russia and Night Wolves patron – was working as a mid-

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RIA NOVOSTI/AP IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF ANDREY ORLOV

level KGB agent on the other side of the Wall in Dresden.

Around 1991, the Night Wolves began to shed their outlaw origins. That August, members helped man barricades against tanks surrounding Russia's parliament building – part of a failed coup by Communist hard-liners against the reform-minded Gorbachev. His successor, Boris Yeltsin, awarded the Surgeon a medal for his efforts (an honour he now abhors). Soon after, the Night Wolves had a business manager and offers to star in advertising campaigns. “By the summer of 1991, *Khirurg* [Surgeon] himself was more often to be seen on youth television programmes, video clips and in the papers, than at his former notorious hang-outs,” Pilkington wrote.

Russia's transition to a Western market economy in the 1990s brought widespread unemployment and organised crime for much of the next decade. The Night Wolves, however, managed to flourish. In 1992, the Surgeon opened the Sexton in Moscow, a rock club modelled on his old haunt in West Berlin. Three years later, the Night Wolves had a tattoo parlor, a bike shop and a “Wolf Wear” clothing line. Their first annual bike show attracted thousands of fans. “Sometimes I can see the surgical table in my dreams,” the Surgeon tells me in Sevastopol. “But I understand now I'm doing exactly what God saved me for. So I'm kind of paying my debt. But I have never been so happy in my life as I was with my first motorcycle, a Jawa.”

Motorcycle clubs are often a peculiar mix of anti-social defiance and democratic governance, with members making decisions as a group according to a system of voting rules. In the mid-1990s, the Sexton in Moscow burned down and, a few years later, the Surgeon – through a company he owned – acquired two buildings on the outskirts of the city that could accommodate a new club and biker headquarters. According to Russian journalist Nataliya Telegina, who investigated the deal, many members assumed the new space would be common property. But the Surgeon gave himself exclusive ownership, Telegina tells me. A former member says that the Surgeon also rewrote the club's charter, creating a centralised structure that gave him more power.

“It was like Hitler times in Germany – Hitler was a person who took power in a democratic way,” says Ivan, a member of the Moscow Hells Angels chapter. “The

same story was in the Night Wolves. What *Khirurg* asked from the club was special status to have not one, not two votes, but to have *the vote* to make any decision.” (Rejecting these claims, a club spokesman states that the Surgeon is “very democratic.”) Ivan, a stocky Angel who goes by the name Hippo, and another member named Sascha had agreed to meet at a restaurant in downtown Moscow. Both were former members of the Night Wolves and both had quit in 2001, outraged by what they viewed as the Surgeon's growing megalomania. Along with about eight other former Night Wolves, the two men soon formed the Hells Angels chapter in Moscow.

The Surgeon appears to have flirted with modelling the Night Wolves on the notorious Western motorcycle club – early on, they reportedly operated according to a word-for-word Russian translation of the Hells Angels' rule book. But he has now become an outspoken detractor of so-called outlaw clubs. In the Russian press, he has called them “arms dealers”, “demons” and “drug cartels on wheels”. In June, the Surgeon asked Russia's parliament to include both the Bandidos and Hells Angels on the government's new list targeting “undesirable” foreign organisations.

Since Ivan and Sascha's departure, the Night Wolves have entirely left behind their counterculture past. There were the Surgeon's appearances with Putin and financial grants from the Kremlin, but also regular rallies at Orthodox religious sites. There was a “Wolf” holding company providing security and plans for a youth competition combining motorcycles with elements of “combat in ruined buildings, martial arts, possession of firearms and bladed weapons”. In January, the Surgeon helped co-found Anti-Maidan, a patriotic group to counter any pro-democracy movements that might take hold in Russia.

“We don't consider them a motorcycle club,” Ivan says. “We don't have political organisations. There is quite famous phrase in Russia: If you heard the word patriotism, it means that someone steals something.”

“Someone smart said the twisted mind is a good field for the creation of monsters,” Ivan continues. “He wanted to be number one. In his world, that's the guy who had more possibilities, more money, more influence or more power. So he just started to construct his world, and he's really successful. He is the minister of biker culture.”

THE NIGHT WOLVES' MOSCOW headquarters sits on a desolate river flood plain outside the city, where Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev once dreamed of building a Russian Disneyland. The Sexton has become a mecca for Russian bikers, and the property contains a dance club, several bars and a restaurant serving sushi and “Crimean Tea”. The Surgeon, I had read, sleeps on a pullout sofa somewhere in the sprawling compound.

The property has a *Mad Max* Bartertown aesthetic, but also a strongly martial vibe. In the courtyard, two howitzers flank a stage resembling a warship. A Soviet tank sits parked nearby. The Night Wolves have taken a particular interest in educating Russia's youth, and the Sexton also doubles as the venue for the club's Kremlin-funded holiday shows for children. In the 2013 performance, a character resembling the Statue of Liberty attempts to kidnap the snow princess Snegurochka. The Night Wolves thwart her plan. “We set a goal to create an alternative to foreign domination,” the Surgeon told a Russian paper. Children “need to see that evil is really scary”.

The club's character became notably nationalist around 2009. That July, Putin, then prime minister, followed a meeting with President Obama with a trip to the Sexton. Russian media reported that Putin gave the Surgeon “a huge Russian flag, expressing his hope that the flag would ‘protect’ them on their way” to the upcoming bike show in Sevastopol. From then on, according to Elizabeth Wood, a Russia scholar at MIT and co-author of the upcoming book *The Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, the two men met frequently: “Zaldostanov brought Putin letters and souvenirs from Sevastopol; Putin encouraged Zaldostanov to create pro-Russian shows in Crimea.”

For his part, the Surgeon tells me the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. had left him deeply embittered. “All the values were lost, everybody started kicking their history, spitting on their own granddads,” he says. “All these pretenders I always hated – they painted themselves so quickly from Communists to capitalists.” His disillusionment, he explains, led to a time of desert wandering, a search for answers. Eventually he identified those responsible: proponents of democracy, liberalism, Wall Street. Behind them all lurked the hidden hand. “This democratic system is the same as communism. I see no difference, the same lies, the same fuckery,” he says. (He became religious, the Surgeon claims, after meeting a priest at a fellow member's burial service.) Eventually, the Surgeon refashioned the Night Wolves to combat these dark forces – the motorcycle as ve-

“THE COUNTRY NEEDS NEW PATRIOTIC STARS, AND THE NIGHT WOLVES ARE HELPING THE KREMLIN REWRITE THE NARRATIVE.”

hicle of liberation. “The model was born in the USA,” Evgeny Strogov, the leader of the Night Wolves’ Nomads chapter, tells me. “We take, but we make little bit different.”

Several Russian journalists, however, have identified another member, named Alexey Weitz, as most responsible for the Night Wolves’ turnaround. A former theatre actor, Weitz joined the club in the mid-2000s while also working for a nationalist think tank, and later became an apparatchik for Right Cause, a political party with a self-proclaimed “patriotic bias” that is supported by the Kremlin. According to British journalist Peter Pomerantsev, Weitz helped give form to the Surgeon’s religious and patriotic impulses. As the Kremlin initiated its widespread campaign to quash dissent while mobilising nationalist fervour, it found an ideal partner in the motorcycle club. “The country needs new patriotic stars, the great Kremlin reality show is open for auditions, and the Night Wolves are... helping the Kremlin rewrite the narrative of protestors from political injustice and corruption to one of Holy Russia versus Foreign Devils,” Pomerantsev writes in his recent book *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*.

Weitz, who wears his hair pulled back in a ponytail and bears a striking resemblance to comedian Ricky Gervais, agreed to meet late one Wednesday night at the Sexton. When I arrive, he is sitting at a table quietly sipping tea. I explain that I am curious to learn more about his role within the Night Wolves. “History will tell my position,” he answers obliquely. If I want to understand the Night Wolves, he continues, I need to look into “the phenomena of the Russian soul”.

The Night Wolves’ relationship with the state is, in Weitz’s telling, not a case of cunning co-option but a marriage of convenience. “When people see Putin and the Night Wolves together, they think it’s political,” he says. “Right now, our interests and the interests of the government are the same. We’re going to defend the state because as soon as the state falls down, it’s going to be anarchy. There are plans by the Anglo-Saxons – European ideas and liberal lobbies inside the country – that are threatening the values of Russian people.”

Later, Weitz shows me a large painting in the Sexton featuring a 14th-century Russian Orthodox monk named Alexander Peresvet. By some accounts, Peresvet

died in a heroic duel with a soldier from the Mongol empire. But in a larger battle that followed, a small Russian force defeated the Mongols’ much-superior army – a victory whose importance is disputed by historians but trumpeted today by Russian nationalists as the opening skirmish that freed the country from the Mongol “yoke”. Other Night Wolves had mentioned Peresvet, and I had even seen his image on one member’s T-shirt. He was, it seemed, their ur-patriot and patron saint. In the Sexton’s painting, Peresvet sits astride a horse – the gallant warrior-monk preparing to vanquish invaders and return the motherland to glory. The artist, however, gave the horse a strange feature: The shadow it casts is not equine but that of a stalking wolf.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2014, THE UKRAINIAN military advanced on the pro-Russia militias that had taken control of the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk in the Donbass region. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the subsequent fighting. In Luhansk, electricity failed and water taps ran dry. Food became scarce. Many residents moved into their basements to avoid shelling, while others made tunnels between apartments to keep from venturing outside. A mortuary keeper in the city lived off chocolate bars and pig fat and played Thelonious Monk’s “Round Midnight” on his saxophone to put his mind off the war.

Several months later, officials from Ukraine and the self-declared separatist republics signed a cease-fire agreement, but the fighting quickly resumed. The U.S. and other Western countries allege Russia is supporting the rebels with men and supplies, a claim Putin has denied despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In late 2014, the Ukrainian government established an economic blockade of both breakaway republics, a move intended to break the rebels’ grip but one that also made food and medicine scarce for the already-suffering civilian population. In addition to killing thousands, the ongoing war has displaced more than a million residents in Ukraine and devastated entire neighbourhoods and villages.

As we drive into the rebel-controlled Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) in mid-July, the scars from the conflict are quickly evident. Artillery has sheared off the corner of an apartment building. But for an orange-

roofed Mr. Kebab stand, many of the businesses are shuttered. “Welcome to the rebel banana state,” says Taras, my minder from the rebel government, as we drive into the city’s downtown. “This is Ukrainian exterior design,” he says, pointing out a flattened building. “It was a vegetarian shop. A heavy military object for sure.”

Taras, 26, is the LPR’s youthful deputy minister of information. A former graphic designer, he joined the rebels in 2014, then set up a pro-Russian news channel and also conceived the LPR’s coat of arms: a red star framed by ears of wheat. Burly and profane, Taras wears a thick beard and is rarely without a cigarette. The Ukrainians have labelled Taras a terrorist, he says, but I find him affable and appealingly subversive. Fiddling with the stereo, he queues up Depeche Mode’s “Policy of Truth”.

“It’s a good soundtrack for propaganda worker,” he quips.

I had made the long journey to Luhansk to learn about the city’s Night Wolves chapter, which had largely avoided the media exposure of their comrades in Moscow. A few intriguing scraps had slipped out: On its sanctions list, the U.S. government alleged the motorcycle club had recruited fighters for the rebel militias and deployed members to the front lines of Luhansk and Kharkiv. Several, including a member named “Vampire”, were reportedly killed. The Night Wolves in Luhansk appeared to have crystallised into a more militant form – a modern incarnation of the warrior-monk Peresvet.

As night falls, Taras drives to a hilltop overlooking the city. The rebel government imposes an 11 p.m. curfew, and residents have moved indoors. Luhansk, which had a prewar population of more than 400,000 people, is mostly black and still. Not far away, a steady stream of orange anti-aircraft fire arcs into the dark sky. “The advantage of the civil war is that all industry died,” Taras observes. “If the conflict will move another three years, it will look like *Jumanji*.”

In the morning, Taras and I visit the local Night Wolves’ headquarters, a defunct sports complex beside the blighted Olkhovka River. As we arrive, a backhoe lifts a bucketful of muck from the water, then deposits it into a dump truck. “I want to resurrect things that were artificially killed,” Vitaly, the club’s leader, says as we take shade from the sun under a tree. “I feel my inner voice, it is my mission to my motherland.” A few other Night Wolves mill around, but the compound is otherwise quiet. Many members departed earlier on a motorcycle run to Russia to promote the “independence of Donbass”.

Stern and laconic, Vitaly wears a side-arm and goes by the nom de guerre “the Prosecutor”. The motorcycle club, he con-

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firms, is now acting as a special police squad; another member later tells me they guard gas stations and other sites and occasionally patrol the city for drunks and criminal elements. “We’re a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” Vitaly says. “We are police, SWAT division.” The leader of another Night Wolves chapter had denied the club’s involvement in Ukraine’s conflict, but Vitaly is surprisingly forth-

stepped on a mine. “Vampire” died in a burning tank. Photographs of the dead men, along with about 100 other rebels, were now memorialised in a glass display case in downtown Luhansk.

Since then, the Night Wolves appear to have transformed into an urban-renewal regiment. They organise local concerts. They dredged tons of garbage from the Olkhovka and poured sand to create a

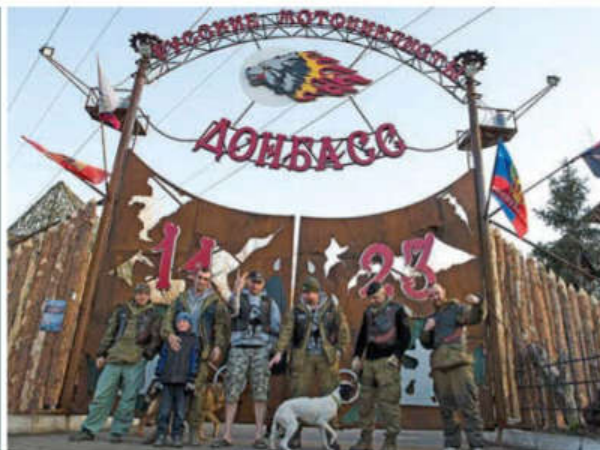
nation building writ small. But it becomes clear the sweep of his dream is much grander. The mission of Night Wolves, he declares, “is to resurrect the motherland – to connect the pieces that were killed off. We’re one land, one people. We were artificially divided. We have Night Wolves divisions in territories of former Soviet Union. Our mission is to bring the patriotism, orthodoxy, love for motherland and reunite.” There are, I suggest, a great deal of people in these republics with no wish to reunite. “Everyone has his own right to think different,” he replies. “And for those who don’t want to reunite, I have a question: Why do those countries keep them?” Vitaly’s vision of reintegrating former Soviet states is both bold and provocative, and sure to alarm these governments – at least one of which had already begun preparing militarily along its border for such an outcome.

AS THE UKRAINIAN MILITARY sought to reclaim Donbass from the pro-Russian rebels in the summer of 2014, a village outside Luhansk called Novosvitlivka saw some of the most devastating fighting. Small but strategically important, the town is situated on a highway connecting Luhansk to the Russian border about 30 kilometres to the east – a conduit between satellite and mothership. The Night Wolves, along with other rebels, battled the Ukrainian army for two weeks for control of Novosvitlivka. In the process, half the town was razed – scores of homes, a kindergarten, the hospital. The town’s House of Culture, whose facade bore an 18-metre mosaic panel called “Tree of Life”, was bombed into ruin. At least 100 civilians were killed. “There was heavy fighting,” Vitaly recalls, speaking wearily of the battle. “Artillery and street to street. RPGs. A lot of people were killed in their basements.” Ukrainian soldiers also barricaded locals in the town’s church, he claims. “If someone resisted, they killed him.”

On a windswept plaza outside Novosvitlivka, the House of Culture still sits charred and abandoned. But the hospital has been rebuilt – backed by a singer from Donbass known as the Russian Frank Sinatra, rumour has it. Artillery has staved in the local church’s onion dome; its replacement sits on wood blocks nearby, ready to be fitted snugly atop the roof like a hat. Down the road, I stop at a white four-storey apartment complex. In a nearby cellar stairwell, someone had handwritten a plea on the wall: “Attention. Don’t put any grenades into basement!!! There are no terrorists. Only locals.”

During the fighting, many residents hid in the buildings’ cellars. “The Ukrainian army was there,” says Tamara, a retiree with hair dyed the colour [Cont. on 105]

WOLF PACK
Club members at their base in the rebel-held city of Luhansk, Ukraine, this year. Since 2014, nearly 8,000 people have been killed in the conflict. “We’re a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” a member says. “We are police, SWAT division.”



right. “It’s no secret. We’re not ashamed,” he says. “The Ukrainian government is fascist. Here is Russia. That’s why we were staying and defending it.”

In 2014, as the Ukrainian military closed in on Luhansk, according to Vitaly, the Night Wolves helped blockade the city. They later fought in at least four villages and, backed by Russian tanks, laid siege with other rebels to the Luhansk airport held by the Ukrainian paratroopers – a devastating battle that left the facility in ruins. Around 40 Night Wolves took part in the war and at least three were killed. A member named Sergei Koptev was killed by a mortar. Another, nicknamed “Bison”,




beach for locals. In a park adjacent to their compound, they installed a sandbox and gazebos. Wrecked tanks and armoured military vehicles and casings from rockets litter their compound – what the club hoped to transform into an open-air museum of “broken Ukrainian art”. In a greenhouse nearby, the Night Wolves are growing tomatoes. “Our nation is crumpled, smashed from long years ago,” Vitaly says. “We are trying to say not everything fell apart. These good things were in a dark corner, but everything can be resurrected.”

At first, I take Vitaly’s notion of resurrection to mean restoring local parks –

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That's The Power Of Love



Loved-up chanteuse comes in from the cold and shines on her poppiest effort yet



Sarah Blasko

Eternal Return EMI

★★★★

BY ANNABEL ROSS

Sarah Blasko is in love. Butterflies in the tummy, spring in the step, shout it from the rooftops, love. It's something she makes abundantly and unapologetically clear on her fifth studio album, *Eternal Return*, and it marks a buoyant departure from 2009's *As Day Follows Night* (described by Blasko as a "hopeful heartbreak" record) and 2012's *I Awake*, written during a particularly lonely time Blasko spent living in Brighton, England.

Both records were brilliant, beautifully drawn navigations of Blasko's darker waters, which might cause fans to approach *Eternal Return* with trepidation. Blasko does sadness and pain so well, and the last thing we need is another bloody record about love, surely?

Doubters, breathe a sigh of relief; it turns out that Blasko in love is a lovely thing indeed. It's brought with it a completely new sound on her most electronic, purest pop record to date, aided by her songwriting partners, bandmates Ben Fletcher and David Hunt, as well as Nick Wales, who arranged orchestral parts on *I Awake* and with whom Blasko co-wrote the score for Sydney Dance Company's *Emergence* in 2013.

Blasko produced the sombre *I Awake* herself; on *Eternal Return*, she brought in Burke Reid (the Drones, Courtney Barnett) to help steer the ship. Her favoured piano has been replaced with a Prophet synthesiser and the guitars have been almost completely stripped away to help create a sound palette that references new wave Eighties music, most emphatically Bronski Beat and Berlin.

The result is a love album that's unequivocal in its declaration, but stylistically its position is less obvious, and much more interesting. Were it not for the blatant lyrics on "I'd Be Lost", it might be about something much darker than love, and "Better With You" sounds (mercifully) more spooky than sappy. Blasko's spent enough time not in love to know a record can't be sustained on elation.

She charts her romance in chronological order, starting before the fact. "I Am Ready" sees her shedding a skin and turning out a self open to love and all its possibilities. "I am ready, I am ready, I am ready to be re-ee-veal-ed," she wails, a military snare drum fortifying her stance. "I Wanna Be Your Man" is an up-yours to the male establishment swathed in pretty synths, and the following eight songs track the course of a woman falling in love, from the thrilling precipice to the "Luxurious" early-stage punch-drunk immersion.

Some of Blasko's songs have leant themselves to remixing in the past (the Presets' superb version of "Hold On My Heart"), but tracks such as "I'd Be Lost" and "Maybe This Time" are fully formed dance-pop songs. "Only One", with its tinkling, circular synth pattern and exultant chorus, is the most euphoric of the lot, a sugary, levitating, likely radio hit. Blasko has never sounded happier. The tone of closer "Without" is more mournful, with haunting organ, but don't let that fool you. "If you have not love, if you have not love, if you have not love you have nothing at all," Blasko sings. It's a bit of glum news for the singles among us, but for Blasko, the shoe is now firmly on the other foot, and it becomes her.

KEY TRACKS: "Only One", "Maybe This Time", "Luxurious"



The Recipe For Success

Perennial rock & rollers deliver the goods on 10th studio album

You Am I *Porridge* & *Hotsauce* Inertia ★★★★★



There's nothing like a gleeful middle finger to signal an unrepentant return. Especially with the other hand flapping behind your ear and one Cuban heel stomping double time. "Good Advices" is just such a spectacular act of dancing-backwards co-ordination for Tim Rogers & Co: as sassy a set-opener as any in You Am I's esteemed back pages.

Recorded between Daptone HQ in Brooklyn and some garage in Melbourne's suburban north, their pointedly unheralded first record in five years relishes that filthy, fuel-injected chemistry for three tracks before its first, more worldly diversions.

That's the Dap-Kings' horns and soul chorus on "Two Hands". A positively oceanic string section empathises with Rogers' classic romantic desperation in "One Drink At a Time". In "Out To the Never, Now" and "Buzz the Boss", drummer Rusty Hopkinson and guitarist Davey Lane each rise to the occasion on thrashing cymbals and walls of power-pop harmony. In more familiar grooves, a metronomic guitar and close-miked strings place Rogers' confessional "Daemons" smack in the "Purple Sneakers"/"Heavy Heart" lineage, and "Beehive" recalls some of the Carnaby Street pomp of *Hourly Daily*.

The fact that all of this smacks more of wide parameters than comfy laurels or furtive experimentation is testament to a seemingly effortless energy which, after some 25 years, will kick your arse and refuse to apologise.

MICHAEL DWYER



Chris Isaak

First Comes the Night

Universal ★★½

Remember "Wicked Game"? He's still playing it

Versatile guy, Chris Isaak. Hilarious, too. Neither asset is obvious from his records – unless you find the repetition of the heartbreak motif a winsome running gag. "Every night I still dream of you," he croons in "Perfect Lover". "It's the same dream I must go through." And so must we, as the backdrop shifts from Tijuana sunset to Elvis movie dream sequence to saloon closing time. He's not likely to out-Orbison "Wicked Game" but hey, he knows what the ladies like. His lines get better in slap-a-billy rockin' mode, as per the chirpy death wish of "Down In Flames", the zany sideshow organ vibe of "Don't Break My Heart" (see?) and the boogie woogie train-rattler, "Running Down the Road".

M.D.



Killing Joke

Pylon Spinefarm/Caroline Australia

★★★★½

Jazz Coleman and Co. cast a menacing eye over the world

Proto-industrial veterans Killing Joke are still saturating their anthems with metal riffing, murky electronics and forceful rhythms. Their 16th album is kept sharply melodic and even glossy – in its blackened way. Working again with producer Tom Dalgety (Royal Blood), the UK quartet don't try to sound overly current. They do update their angst for modern times though. Some of the lyrics are too on-the-nose (see "War on Freedom"), but the fame-skewering "Big Buzz" swaps mouthy rage for more subtle irony. Led by Jaz Coleman's doom-laden vocal attack, these songs are burly and protracted. The best ones hurtle ahead with gloomy determination, denouncing our fucked-up world at every step. DOUG WALLEN

Goulding's Glossy Pop

Peaks and troughs abound on the British pop queen's third record

Ellie Goulding *Delirium* Polydor
★★★★½



On the over-crowded stage of pop stars, Ellie Goulding has remained relatively distinctive. Her side ways slip from alt-pop to mainstream success brought a microchip of indie to her compositions, and with it an enviable credibility compared to her peers.

For *Delirium*, Goulding has enlisted the usual bevy of superstar producers: Max Martin, Greg Kurstin and Ryan Tedder all have numerous credits. At times their contributions are a double edged sword – they've imbued *Delirium* with the shiniest beats and synth streams around, but have smoothed out Goulding's most interesting rough edges, including swamping her gorgeously flinty voice within a myriad of instrumentation.

Goulding is at her most fascinating when indulging her quirks – of which there are thankfully still plenty: the layered, ghostly soprano vocals on "Intro (Delirium)", the interlocked polyrhythms of "On My Mind", and

KEY TRACKS:
"Aftertaste",
"Keep On
Dancin'"



the sly, whistling hook on "Keep On Dancin'", which blooms into a glorious mess of splintery percussion. There are also the requisite brilliant and bombastic pop bangers: "Aftertaste" launches off with a chorus of lush harmonies and galloping tom drums, "Devotion" peaks with spacey house synths and her own spliced vocal.

At 16 tracks long it needs an edit (the *Fifty Shades of Grey* cut "Love Me Like You Do" should have been left behind), and there are too many repeated ideas, but Goulding remains consistently interesting throughout.

JULES LEFÈVRE



Here We Go Magic

Be Small Inertia
★★★★½

N.Y. crew return to the bedroom for fourth LP in six years

Where do you go after Nigel Godrich? That's the burning question for Here We Go Magic after the Radiohead producer helped shape the band's art-pop into something direct and expansive on 2012's *A Different Ship*. Those lessons have been brought back to the bedroom – which is where this project began – but there's an unevenness to this collection no matter how fussy and ambitious Luke Temple's arrangements get. Album standout "Ordinary Feeling" starts introspectively, but soon expands into something more lush and atmospheric, while the fuzzed-out folk of "Candy Apple" calls to mind Elephant 6 alumni like Olivia Tremor Control and Apples In Stereo.

DARREN LEVIN



Beach Slang

The Things We Do To Find People Who Feel Like Us

Cooking Vinyl Australia ★★★★★

Thrilling debut from Philly punk rockers

Beach Slang's garage-punk trades heavily in empathy – alongside chiming guitars and shout-along-ready sloganeering – and it's a resounding reminder that when done just right, punk can deliver a freeing emotional purge, where endless possibilities tampered by mundane realities and stupid hangups are best expunged with a guitar and a sense of wonder and frustration. Beach Slang harness that world-weary-but-hopeful insouciance perfectly in "Ride the Wild Haze", the cathartic crunch of "I Break Guitars" and the balladeering "Too Late To Die Young", acknowledging the misfit kid in all of us. It makes for a rousing and brilliant debut.

JAYMZ CLEMENTS



Seal

7 Warner
★★★★

More palatable pop, delivered heart on sleeve

It's been a little hard to take Seal seriously since he popped up as coach on *The Voice* sporting gold-painted talons and spouting platitudes. He's not coaching anymore, but he's still a sentimental soul, and on his ninth studio album he sticks to what he does best – singing big old soppy love songs. He's alternately broken-hearted ("Daylight Saving"), elated ("Every Time I'm With You") and creepily narcissistic ("Your body screaming/I can hear my name," he purrs on "Life on the Dancefloor"). But, thanks to his enduringly affecting croon, and longtime producer partner Trevor Horn, he's also an easy listen (depending on your tolerance for sap and strings; if high, you'll love centerpiece "The Big Love Has Died").

ANNABEL ROSS



GUM

Glamorous Damage
Spinning Top Records ★★★★★

Tame Impala and Pond man returns to solo project

It is to Jay Watson's credit that GUM manages to sonically distinguish itself from the rest of the Perth psychedelic bubble, as defined by Tame Impala, Pond, Mink Mussel Creek et al, where it's often hard to know where one act ends and another begins. Somewhat more minimalist than Tame Impala and Pond, GUM is less song-based, instead letting each track meander through its own groove- or riff-based soundscape, best seen on the compelling "Elafonissi Blue". Not as Sixties-enraptured as 2014's *Delorean Highway*, this is a rush of woozy synths with elements of shoegaze and even passages that recall the rhythms of the Madchester scene. An admirably idiosyncratic, atmospheric curio.

BARNABY SMITH



Bill Ryder-Jones

West Kirby County Primary
Domino ★★★★★

Former the Coral guitarist takes an indie slacker turn

The third LP from Bill Ryder-Jones finds the Arctic Monkeys' touring guitarist in his childhood bedroom, alternately noodling on and tearing at the stillness with a guitar. It's a raw update on *A Bad Wind Blows in My Heart* (2013). Reprising Ryder-Jones' minor obsession with the sea, *West Kirby* is a typically introspective offering – "if you take the pills you might not feel so ill, let's make it easier for you, Bill" ("Daniel") – charged with black irony. Recalling the likes of Babyshambles and Pavement circa *Wowee Zowee* ("Two to Birkenhead"), it's an LP thick with listless highlights in soft focus ("Catharine and Huskisson") – none of which suffer too much from Ryder-Jones' penchant for a needless pause.

GARETH HIPWELL



Raury

All We Need Sony

★★★

Folk & hip-hop dynamo shows promise on debut LP

Nineteen-year-old wunderkind Raury Tullis is an easy person to root for: musically gifted and committed to spreading positivity, he's a likable New Age sage for the millennial generation. On this major label debut, a slew of big name producers (Danger Mouse, Jacknife Lee) attempt to corral Raury's hip-hop-tinged folk musings into a focused LP with mixed results: songs tend to drift where a tighter focus is needed, while Raury's lyrics sometimes veer towards simple platitudes. He's a young artist still finding his feet, but intermittent flashes of brilliance ("Devil's Whisper", "Crystal Express") remind you that genuine greatness in Raury's future seems a certainty.

JAMES JENNINGS



Langhorne Slim & the Law

The Spirit Moves

Dualtone/Cooking Vinyl ★★★★★

Pennsylvania native rouses and stirs with album number five

Langhorne Slim has little to say that hasn't been said before. Despite which, *The Spirit Moves* punches a sizeable hole in the moon, kicking off with the incendiary off-kilter banjo, mariachi horns and bellicose percussion of "Spirit Moves". It couches the singer's earnest confessionals in lush, time-worn arrangements redolent of the country-pop crossovers prosecuted by legendary Sixties label Chart Records. It's an album aglow with mid-century pop, folk-inspired and Gospel-soul charm. "I never truly understood my way around this neighbourhood," Slim sings on closer "Meet Again". Where Nashville's left-of-centre is concerned, he seems to have a fair handle on it.

GARETH HIPWELL



Custard Turn Back the Clock

Smart-arse pop cowboys ride back like they never went

Custard *Come Back, All Is Forgiven* ABC Music ★★★★★½



David McCormack frames the Custard recipe simply in "Factual". "I write songs based on my life/The funny thing is, they're based on my real life." He's not laughing though. Neither is his band, which opts for the funereal thump and twang of a haunted man adrift "in an ocean of time".

It's been almost that long since Brisbane's deadpan suburban pop sociologists split under the usual pressures of growing up. It sounds like the blink of an eye. "I woke up on the road again," is the sudden opening of "Orchids In Water", which twangs in like our narrator has only dreamt he was elsewhere for 16 years.

The real-life plot has advanced, of course, in the slightly pitiful New Year's Eve of "We Are the Parents (Our Parents Warned Us About)", and in the long-range memories of lost girls and flatmates in "1990s" and "Warren Road" – one of two by drummer and erstwhile Go-Between Glenn Thompson. His other one, "Contemporary Art" ("old-fashioned business"), is a great illustration of the cluey larrikin viewpoint that sets Custard apart, though McCormack manages to mock that, too, in the abstract correlations of "Queensland University".

But recorded fast, loose and apparently easy, it's their innate hip-pocket shimmy (sit still to "Record Machine" if you can) that most eloquently proclaims this party still jumping.

MICHAEL DWYER

KEY TRACKS:
"Record Machine", "1990s", "Factual"



Russell Morris

Red Dirt - Red Heart

Chugg Music ★★★★★

Third instalment of veteran rocker's gritty Oz blues narrative

Sharkmouth collected stories from 1940s Melbourne; *Van Diemen's Land* from colonial history. Veteran Oz troubadour Russell Morris completes his raw blues trilogy by reaching deeper into our homegrown annals of more-or-less forgotten heroes and villains, from the wild colonial Castlemaine boogie of "Cut You Loose" to the hot sun pulse and shimmer of "Kadaitcha Man". Characters are familiar but the narrator's perspectives are skewed and loaded in ways that invite deeper reading. Morris mostly stoops to guttural growl to match the earthy chug of his lean, twangin' bar band, but the soft timbre of his flaxen-haired Seventies is a treat on the affectionate closer "Nullarbor Sand".

M.D.



Def Leppard

Def Leppard earMusic

★★★★½

Resilient British rockers bring the Eighties back to life

Def Leppard have a history of thriving on adversity – they created their best album, 1987's *Hysteria*, in the wake of the car accident that cost drummer Rick Allen his arm. Following guitarist Vivian Campbell's lymphoma diagnosis in 2013, the British quintet have created a guitar-heavy record that packs as big a melodic punch as *Hysteria* or 1983's *Pyromania*, if not as consistent a one. But there are songs here – "Let's Go", "Dangerous", "Invincible" – that stand up next to anything from the band's late-Eighties prime. It is, of course, as fashionable as a pair of stone-wash denim jeans, but Def Leppard gave up caring about that long ago. Ten albums in, the Sheffield rockers are in rude form.

ROD YATES

Dinosaur Pile-Up

British trio summon the ghosts of grunge on bludgeoning LP

Eleven Eleven Double Cross Records ★★★★★



Brandishing a sound as heavy as their name suggests, this Leeds trio hark back to the days when Seattle was the epicentre of the musical universe. To label them mere grunge revivalists would, however, be unfair – as with Royal Blood (with whom they share a producer, Tom Dalgety) the band worship at the altar of the riff, injecting dynamics and melody into the equation with a beefed-up vigour that makes this a very modern concern indeed. With a sense of melody that falls somewhere between Nirvana and Failure, the likes of “Friend Of Mine” and “Willow Tree” are like sonic shots of adrenaline, “Anxiety Trip” is as sludgy as molasses, while “Crystalline” proves the trio know their way around a good chorus. Textured closer “Cross My Heart” suggests the band are capable of broadening their sonic palette – hopefully we’ll see more of that on album four.

R.Y.

KEY TRACKS: “Friend Of Mine”, “11:11”



KEY FACTS

HOMETOWN Leeds

BACKSTORY Formed by frontman Matt Bigland in 2007, the singer/guitarist played all the instruments on 2010 debut *Growing Pains*. After myriad line-up changes, the current

line-up has been together since 2014.

WHAT'S IN A NAME Bigland took the band's name from a scene in the *King Kong* remake where stampeding dinosaurs trip and pile onto one another.



Neon Indian

Vega Intl. Night School

Pop Frenzy ★★★★★

Third record pushes further into dance territory

Before Austin's Alan Palomo became Neon Indian, he was releasing music as VEGA – a thoroughly more dance oriented act than the scruffy lo-fi of his more famous creation. *Vega Intl. Night School* is his attempt to join the two – and it's more or less a successful marriage. There's the scratchy, scattered dance funk of “The Glitzy Hive” and “Slumlord”, the spacey psych rock of “Techno Clique”, and the off the wall experiment of “C'est La Vie”. There's even a breathless reggae turn with “Annie”. Tracked mostly while floating in the Caribbean on a cruise ship, the looseness of Neon Indian lingers, although instead of hanging back, *Vega Intl. Night School* never stops moving.

JULES LEFEVRE



My Disco

Severe

Temporary Residence ★★★★★½

Melbourne cult heroes are back to scare the bejesus out of you

Dark and claustrophobic, tense and minimal in the extreme – this is the LP *My Disco* have been building to for years. While 2010's *Little Joy* reduced their sound into its most basic elements – Rohan Rebeiro's taut drumming, Ben Andrews' jagged guitar, his brother Liam's chant-like singing and stoic bass – it had a cathartic energy that's been absolutely annihilated here. *Severe* was recorded digitally, as opposed to the live feel of past Steve Albini-recorded efforts, and there's a mechanical precision to the playing that heightens the dystopian feel. Punctuated by Liam Andrews' ominous voice, shards of guitars and Rebeiro's unsettling tribal hits, *My Disco* have never sounded so terrifyingly bleak.

D.L.



EL VY

Return To the Moon

4AD/Remote Control ★★★★★

The National frontman steps out on his band with good results

“This record is more autobiographical than anything else I've written, but the details aren't true,” Matt Berninger declares somewhat cryptically in the album bio. The frontman from the National sounds freed-up on this collaboration with Brent Knopf, formerly of mind-bending critical darlings Menomena. While Knopf melds indie rock, funk and disco and channels everyone from David Byrne to Tom Waits on the musical side of things, Berninger puts that brooding baritone to good effect. On “Paul Is Alive” he's 16 again, sitting outside a club and hearing Hüsker Dü and the Smiths. On “It's a Game” he's lamenting the break-up of the Minutemen. He should cheat on the National more often.

BARRY DIVOLA



Darren Middleton

Splinters Ind.

★★★★

Second solo offering from former Powderfinger axeman

The first track on *Splinters*, “Unless You Want Me To”, is a thing of startling splendour; moody, delicate and slow, it is among Middleton's greatest songs. It is hard, though, to be quite as captivated by the rest of the album, intriguingly mournful though it may be. Its mellowness recalls your typical 1970s singer-songwriter, while the influence of at least two Finns can be found. Most songs are attractive, yet the heavy weariness of several of these very serious numbers, and some slightly saccharine gospel-infused backing vocals, can have a dulling effect. Full of collaborations (Missy Higgins, Sahara Beck et al), *Splinters* is a softer, sadder album than 2013's *Translations*, and generally its superior.

BARNABY SMITH



Don McGlashan

Lucky Stars Only Blues Music

★★★★★

Third post-Muttonbirds gem from unsung Kiwi pop master

“Girl Make Your Own Mind Up” was too good to stay lost inside Neil Finn's sprawling supergroup of '09, 7 Worlds Collide. It's rejigged as track one of this masterclass in pop craft: a bridge across six years of contemplation for the former Muttonbird. That's the effect, anyway, of his tone of gratitude for small blessings in “Lucky Stars”, the stoic wisdom of “Hold Onto Your Loneliness”, the keening bliss of “For Your Touch” and the airy daydream of “Charles Kingsford Smith”. McGlashan's disarming chord movements are Finnishly alluring, but there's an inner world all his own between the biblical storm of “When the Trumpets Sound” and the existential sigh of “The Waves Would Roll On”.

M.D.



Jeffrey Lewis & Los Bolts

Manhattan

Rough Trade/Remote Control ★★★

New Yorker returns with first studio album in four years

When you grew up on the Lower East Side and did time in the anti-folk ranks at the East Village's SideWalk Café with Moldy Peaches in the Nineties, you're allowed to call your new LP *Manhattan*. Lewis, a prolific songwriter and comic book artist, sings in a dusty, deep-fried voice about crackheads, crazy old men and an imagined conversation with a pigeon that's like a cross between Allen Ginsberg and Edgar Allan Poe. He stretches himself a bit thin on a couple of long, Yo La Tengo-ish tracks, reeling you back in with snappy, trashy songs about missing his girlfriend and the complicated but entertaining thought processes behind accepting a poorly-paid support tour. **BARRY DIVOLA**



Floating Points

Elaenia Pod/Inertia

★★★★

Rising UK producer deepens his signature sound

Sam Shepherd's debut album as Floating Points swims freely between propulsive drive, diffuse wandering and anxious tension-building. It's like channel-surfing through the cosmos, with lingering stops at jazz, funk and classical. (The epic "Silhouettes" showcases Shepherd's vision at its most expansive.) Uniting all those genre threads are his signature bubbings of soothing melodic layers. Working with a fluid team of instrumental players, Shepherd evokes the feeling of a luminous, morphing orchestra. Some tracks are more fleeting than others, yet they all fit into his grand design. Likewise, *Elaenia* can be mind-bogglingly ambitious, but it goes down surprisingly easy. **DOUG WALLEN**

BOOKS



Carrie Brownstein

Missives From a Rock Trailblazer

Carrie Brownstein *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*

Hachette ★★★



Sleater-Kinney guitarist/vocalist Carrie Brownstein tackles her first memoir with an uncommon mix of intimate detail (especially covering her childhood), writerly chops and set-the-record-straight attitude. Yet sizeable chunks of her life get skipped over. While the book makes a point of charting Sleater-Kinney's course from a cult punk trio to one of rock's most acclaimed bands, Brownstein barely mentions co-creating the TV comedy hit *Portlandia*

or moonlighting as a music critic for years. And insights into S-K's actual music are fleeting compared to Brownstein's accounts of personal anxiety and health issues. It's sharply and bravely told, but the gaps are hard to ignore **DOUG WALLEN**

PJ Harvey & Seamus Murphy

The Hollow of the Hand Bloomsbury Circus ★★★★★



PJ Harvey's first published collection of poetry is a collaboration with photographer Seamus Murphy, exploring Kosovo and Afghanistan before finishing in Washington, D.C. None more than a page long, the poems are sparse yet evocative vignettes rich in setting as well as social commentary. Extreme poverty and resilient tradition are documented in words and images alike, the latter ranging from

grainy black-and-white to scene-stealing colour. The cumulative effect is humbling, granting elliptical glimpses at the people behind every outstretched hand, whether in war-ravaged nations or the U.S. capital. **D.W.**

Mick Wall *Foo Fighters: Learning To Fly*

Hachette Australia ★★½



British journalist Mick Wall makes his intentions clear early on: "They wanted this book to be about the Foo Fighters," he begins. "Something that only exists in your head. There is only one real Foo Fighter and his name is Dave Grohl." Wall then insults the other members of the band before embarking on what is essentially a Grohl biography, with half the book dedicated to his pre-Foos career.

It reads easily enough, but revelations are scant, and without any new interviews with Grohl it's hardly authoritative. **ROD YATES**



The Go Set

Rolling Sound Four Four/Universal

★★★

Folk-punk traditionalists discover new life on seventh LP

Whether it's touching acoustic odes to Australian war vets ("The Last March"), muscly pub rock ("Seven Years") or rollicking, celebratory punk rock ("Raise a Glass"), the Go Set's purview has widened considerably while sharpening their focus, making *Rolling Sound* their best colonial Australian and modern folk-punk mix yet. There are just enough Celtic flourishes – accordion, pipes, mando – to give moments a traditional edge ("In the Streets"), but not so many as to overshadow the Go Set's punk backbone. The urgent atmosphere – no song exceeds three and a half minutes – accompanies Justin Keenan's everyman songwriting nicely. *Rolling Sound* is a banner wave for thoughtful Aussie folk-punk. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**



The Wainwright Sisters

Songs In the Dark Inertia

★★★★½

An album of adult lullabies from folk-rock royalty

Sisters from another mother Martha Wainwright and Lucy Wainwright Roche didn't grow up together, but their first collaborative album celebrates a "shared musical DNA". There's the haunting folk standard "Long Lankin", sung a capella by Lucy before her sister joins in unsettling harmony, and covers of songs by Woody Guthrie and Jimmie Rodgers. The dark humour behind Rosalie Sorrels' "Baby Rocking Medley" will resonate with anyone that's dealt with a screaming baby at 3am, while Martha's take on her late mother Kate McGarrigle's "Lullaby For a Doll" is heartfelt and poignant, which is what this entire collection is all about. **DARREN LEVIN**

Return of the King

Victorian psych collective unplug for seventh album in five years

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard

Paper Mâché Dream Balloon

Flightless/Remote Control ★★★★★



Life's like a King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard album – you never know what you're gonna get. Since emerging from the Victorian coastal town of Anglesea back in 2010, this seven-piece institution has taken us on a wildly eclectic trip – from the Thee Oh Sees-esque fuzz of *12 Bar Bruise* to spaghetti Western concept album *Eyes Like the Sky* and this year's meandering jam session *Quarters!*. It's hard enough to sustain a run rate of two albums each year, let alone two excellent albums a year, but King Gizzard have somehow bucked the trend and done it again on *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon*. It's a big call, but this could actually be their best record yet.

Fresh from their ARIA nomination for Best Jazz Album (really!), they've ditched their pedals,



poured themselves a Cognac, and cut a psych-folk album that takes its aesthetic cues from the Small Faces, the Incredible String Band, early Brian Jonestown Massacre, and even the Wombles (just check out that paper mâché cover!).

Switching to acoustic gear has done little to dampen the energy. Most tracks here could soundtrack a road trip to Woodstock, especially "The Bitter Boogie" and its nod to Canned Heat. "Cold Cadaver" fizzes like a Berocca, while the lounge-y opener "Sense" showcases their new secret weapon: Flute. They'll probably ditch it by album eight.

DARREN LEVIN

KEY TRACKS:

"Sense", "Cold Cadaver", "Bone"



Natalie Merchant

Paradise is There: The New Tigerlily Recordings Warner

★★★

'Tigerlily' revisited is pleasant but inessential

Twenty years after *Tigerlily* marked Merchant's emancipation from 10,000 Maniacs, her solo debut has been re-recorded, the songs rearranged and reordered. Some tracks have been bedded with extra strings, many have been slowed down (making plodding "Beloved Wife" and "Seven Years" soporific) and some have been stripped back (the Latin guitar groove of "Carnival" is painfully absent). It's not all bad news – these songs, like Merchant's voice, have aged well, and what came across as premature world-weariness in 1995 is far more digestible now that she's a 52-year-old woman. Still, it's hard to make a convincing case for *Paradise*.

ANNABEL ROSS



Reece Mastin

Change Colours

Social Family Records ★★★★★½

Singer-songwriter ups the guitars on third album

The cost of winning a show like *The X Factor* at the age of 16 is that, in the eyes of many, you will forever be linked to that moment. It's happened to Reece Mastin, and he's still battling to overcome the pre-conceived notions that accompany his name. Now 20 and on an indie label after parting ways with Sony, Mastin's third LP sees him navigating that rocky path to maturity, showing off his formidable pipes on the distinctly rocking "You Gotta Go" and his undeniable pop nous on "You Could Be Wild", while the closing title-track ties things up on a dramatic, gospel-tinged note. What's lacking is some grit, the polished pop production stopping Mastin from truly breaking free.

ROD YATES



Car Seat Headrest

Teens of Style Matador

★★★★★

Seattle lo-fi pop savant emerges from the internet

Will Toledo, 23, released 11 albums on Bandcamp before *Matador* came knocking, with this collection reworking and expanding on the best of those releases. Toledo's fuzzy songs often come across like a more chaotic Weezer, with the impressive overlapping vocals, harmonies and jumpy melodies – most stunning on "Times to Die". On "The Drum" he explores a more frenzied punk racket reminiscent of Jay Reatard, while the odd light psychedelic touch from synthesizers adds restrained whimsy to these otherwise earthy, guitar-heavy anthems. A record that documents a young artist's history as well as signalling his substantial potential.

B.S.



Oneohtrix Point Never

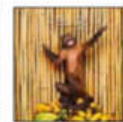
Garden of Delete Warp/Inertia

★★★★½

Revered experimentalist keeps it unpredictable

After the gaseous New Ageisms of 2013's *R Plus Seven*, Daniel Lopatin takes a much noisier turn here. Tracks manifest as fleeting nightmares, full of non-sequitur samples and jarring chaos. Rock guitar rears up on "Lift" and lead single "I Bite Through It", adding even more volatility to these spiky collages. Most varied of all is the blown-out "Sticky Drama", evoking everything from jackhammering industrial and hardcore to chipmunked R&B. Such abrupt changeability can make this feel more like a playlist of clipped sketches than a cohesive album. But Lopatin is so adept at mutating textures and tempos that his trademark scrambling of genres is still reliably absorbing.

DOUG WALLEN



!!!

As If Warp/Inertia

★★★★★

U.S. dance-punkers get weirder, better, looser on sixth album

!!! have been churning out consistently adventurous butt-shaking tunes for nearly two decades. The group's haphazard albums of genre-flipping are less standalone statements, more crate-digging spins across dancefloors of yore. On *As If* they've dialled up the "dance" component, digging into DIY electronics – indeed, the one misstep, "Every Little Bit Counts", is a patchy stab at celebratory guitar-pop. Everything else is funny, smart and infectious – "Sick Ass Moon" sees a cool, rippling techno pattern devolve into hyperactive frontman/cheerleader Nic Offer's pitch-shifted vocals; highlight "Bam City" is a wonky, glam jam. !!! only get better.

MARCUS TEAGUE



BØRNS

Dopamine Universal

★★★★½

Enchanting romance from LA-based pop savant

If Garrett Børns' 2014 EP *Candy* offered a taste of his sincere and melodious electronic-infused pop, his debut LP sees him realise the full spectrum of that colourful vision, one where Brian Wilson, Brian Eno, Marc Bolan and Prince all meet over a synthesiser. A sense of innocence recalls Devendra Banhart, while some tracks evoke James Blake – though BØRNS is a much warmer presence. There is something pleasantly old-fashioned about it all, despite the programmed instrumentation; perhaps because of the Bolan influence (“Electric Love”), and the falsetto vocals, one is reminded of numerous Sixties girl groups. Morsels like “10,000 Emerald Pools” mark *Dopamine* as a delightfully charming joy. **BARNABY SMITH**



Palms

Crazy Rack Ivy League

★★★★½

Indie Sydneysiders set modest goals and reach them with ease

Palms aren't pursuing world domination – on their second LP they bask in the familiar, playing ramshackle garage-rock tunes with lyrics about hanging out and pursuing elusive crushes. The slacker vibe is charming, and because the album moves briskly – many songs barely scrape the two-minute mark – it's compulsively listenable. While frontman and songwriting force Al Grigg throws the occasional curveball (“Thoughts of You” is a Cheap Trick homage complete with cowbell), he's at his best when belting out uncomplicated sing-a-longs. *Crazy Rack* conjures images of back-yard barbecues and languorous summer nights, and there's nothing wrong with that at all. **D.F.S.**



Two Rap Kings at the Height of Their Powers

Drake and Future are living in the moment on their surprise collaborative mixtape

Drake and Future *What a Time to Be Alive*

Cash Money/Epic/A1 ★★★★★½



What a time to be alive – and being “alive”, as Future and Drake define it, involves having way too many feelings about way too many strippers for way too many sleepless nights. Their surprise mixtape is shrewdly timed, since both MCs are on a creative roll after dropping two of the year's biggest and best albums. It's a quickie, and it sounds that way: a six-day digital dash in the studio. Yet that's why it feels fresh and spontaneous. This is the sound of Future's *Dirty South* meeting Drake's *Great White North*, both artists playing off their louder-than-life personalities without overthinking the details.

KEY TRACKS: “Plastic Bag”, “Big Rings”

Future dominates the chemistry, with his producer Metro Boomin behind most of the tracks. Yet both guys get professional about the struggle. Drake complains about groupies spending too long on their phones, and Future describes that feeling when you mix Adderalls and Percocets in the club, then wonder why you can't get your mind right. The mixtape ends with a pair of solo cuts. Somehow, Drake still sounds like a crafty pop aesthete when he's trying to pick up on Future's spaced-out lunacy. The highlight: “Plastic Bag”, a gallant tribute to the stripper who just scooped their hearts off the floor, in the same plastic bag where she stashes their loot. **ROB SHEFFIELD**



City Calm Down

In a Restless House I Oh You

★★★★★

Pensive dance-rockers' debut well worth the wait

That their excellent 2012 EP, *Movements*, was so well received might explain the long gestation period for CCD's debut album. It was a sleek package of emotive dance-pop both deeply indebted to Joy Division and New Order and uniquely compelling, largely thanks to the brooding sincerity of singer/lyricist Jack Bourke. *LARH* is a measured and successful attempt to quieten comparisons and cast a new identity, one that sees the Melbourne band looking beyond dark clubs (without leaving the dance-floor). The pace is slower, the view is broader and synths have been pared back and joined by guitars and piano. Introspection and elation still tussle, but self-assuredness is what marks this impressive rebirth. **A.R.**



Jackson Firebird

Shake the Breakdown

Warner ★★★★★

Victorian duo maintain their faith in rock & roll

Anyone who's witnessed Jackson Firebird in concert will know just how titanic a live act the Mildura duo are. In the booze-filled setting of a pub gig, the band's sonic limitations are easy to ignore in light of the sheer power with which they attack their instruments – but on record, away from the volume and the sweat, such shortcomings are harder to forgive. Recorded in Austin over three-and-a-half weeks last year, the band's second album still rocks like a bastard – from the Nirvana-esque “Get Away” to the blues stomp of “Sin For Your Lovin’” – but the guitar-drums set-up locks the duo into a dynamic they fail to break out of. Bet it all sounds great live though. **SIMON JONES**



Mutemath

Vitals Sony

★★★

New Orleans quartet trade riffs for synths on fourth album

After two well-wrought if beige albums, Mutemath delivered hot rocket soul boogie in 2011's *Odd Soul*, putting guitar music back on the dancefloor. Four years later, their transformation from garage to club is complete, as *Vitals* eschew *Odd Soul's* hip-shaking muscularity for a much more timely, airy palette. Equal real estate is given to sun-kissed grooves ("Light Up"), Paul Meany's blue-eyed soul ("Monument") and shimmering staircases of synth and texture on existential reveries ("Stratosphere"). It's a mature exploration and maintains their particular, appealing melancholy, but for all of the clever craft and consideration, fans may find more ashes than fire and the sonics fashionably commonplace. **DANIEL MURPHY**



Dream On Dreamer

Songs of Soulitude

A Northern Soul ★★★½

Melbourne lads offer new perspectives on post-hardcore

Dream on Dreamer combine classic hardcore motifs with modern-day metalcore structures, making them hard to pin to any one scene. This distinctive blend of gruffness and melodrama has worked in their favour in the past five years, landing them support slots with a variety of international headliners and attracting a diverse local audience. Their third LP, and best to date, is tight enough to satisfy the no-nonsense hardcore fans but fuelled with enough angst to please the melodic metalcore devotees. There are fewer electronic diversions than on previous releases, but enough experimentation (check out the piano-led "Open Sun" and acoustic closer "Violent Pictures") to warrant repeat plays. **DAN F. STAPLETON**



Caligula's Horse

Bloom InsideOut Music

★★★

Brisbane alt-rockers serve up a two-faced third album

It's hard to get a handle on Caligula's Horse. On one hand they dip their toes in the prog-rock pool, bringing to mind peers like Karnivool, Coheed and Cambria and Dead Letter Circus. At times though, the Brisbane rockers draw from the murkier end of the water, and certain guitar flourishes would sound more at home on a Dream Theater or Pink Floyd epic. It's these more bombastic moments that jar (see lead single "Firelight"), detracting from what is essentially a very strong collection of songs. When Caligula's Horse hit fifth gear they're impressive, but it's the less-inspired balladry that lets them down (compare opener "Bloom" with the fist-pumping charger "Marigold" for evidence). **MATT COYTE**



Guy Garvey

Courting the Squall Universal

★★★½

Elbow guy zigzags through soft-hearted solo debut

Beefy Lancashire romantic Guy Garvey is more bent than Elbow on his solo debut, but no less in thrall to the melody of words. His Mercury-winning art-rock band is on blocks in favour of bony, off-kilter funk-jazz in "Angela's Eyes" and "Belly of the Whale": bass and drums loose, and lyrics weighed for percussive impact at least as much as meaning. "I was gingerly twisting and watching enraptured what else could I do?" he tells the object of his obsession in "Juggernaut", after harp and accordion slow-dance love at first sight. The cinematic feel of Elbow remains but the intimacy is heightened by rich, hand-held arrangements that peak with the pleading pillow talk of "Unwind". **MICHAEL DWYER**

Peel Back the Layers

Californian songstress delivers typically beguiling third album

Joanna Newsom

Divers Drag City/Spunk ★★★★★



"I definitely can't write an easy song," Joanna Newsom confessed in a recent interview – but that doesn't mean she makes music that's difficult to listen to. A Joanna

Newsom song can be appreciated on a superficial level. The structures may not be traditional, but there's always a melody, a turn of phrase for those who have better things to do than unravel the layers. And that really is the beauty of her albums. They can be appreciated like a Monet, or peeled like an onion – and the payoff is almost always profound.

To enter into a Joanna Newsom record is to submit entirely to her self-contained universe. On *Divers* she is a more generous host, offering us snackable songs (by her standards at least), as opposed to the unwieldy structures of *Ys* (2006) and *Have One On Me* (2010), which spans

KEY TRACKS:

"Goose Eggs",
"Sapokanikan",
"Anecdotes"



125 minutes and three discs. Newsom's harp is ever-present, but it's just one element of the colourful tapestry weaved together by multiple arrangers here.

Newsom has described *Divers* as a concept album, but that's probably only apparent to her. Nevertheless, when she sings "The longer you live, the higher the rent" on "Leaving the City" the themes of gentrification touched on in "Sapokanikan" come into focus. Her voice is as operatic and pliable as ever, as she transposes every page of the Great American Songbook to her singular world.

DARREN LEVIN



Mogwai

Central Belters Rock-Action

★★★★★

The definitive best-of from the world's loudest delicate band

It's testament to Mogwai's self-belief that they chose to open their self-curated best-of with one of their earliest songs, "Summer". It shows that they were born fully-formed, paving the way for countless imitators. This collection proudly shows-off every calculated detour that the band has made. Vocals, instrumental, electro, metal, punk and symphonic flourishes ebb in and out of the three-disc collection seamlessly. Hardcore fans will love some of the inclusions, such as the menacing "Christmas Steps", and by disc three, there are some hard-to-find tracks that even they mightn't own. For those yet to discover Mogwai, *Central Belters* paints the entire picture. **M.C.**

REISSUES

Warumpi's Fire Burns Bright

Groundbreaking Indigenous crew have their catalogue reissued

Warumpi Band

Warumpi Band 4 Ever Festival/Warner

★★★★



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is advised that this review includes references to people who have died.

This definitive retrospective encompasses the groundbreaking Warumpi Band's three LPs, along with several engrossing oddments. Formed in Papunya, NT, Warumpi Band's ever-changing line-up was anchored by Elcho Island-born Yolngu frontman George Burarrwanga and whitefella vocalist-guitarist Neil Murray. Warumpi's earliest incarnation as a rock & roll covers band is documented here in a string of raw 1983 CAAMA cassette releases.

KEY TRACK:

"Jailanguru Pakarnu (Out From Jail)"

Debut single "Jailanguru Pakarnu (Out from Jail)" (1983) was a watershed: Australia's first mainstream release sung in language (Luritja). WB's subsequent signing to Midnight Oil's Powderworks label in 1985 precipitated a fertile period of cross-pollination ("Sitdown Money").

Featuring enduring classic "Blackfella/Whitefella", *Big Name, No Blankets* (1985) continues to compel, championing desert rock sung in language ("Warumpinya"),



didjeridoo cycles ("Animal Song"), and the Butcher T'japanangka brothers' funk-inflected rhythm section.

Similarly fervent, *Go Bush!* (1987) boasted blistering Land Rights manifesto "From the Bush", and Murray-penned masterpiece "My Island Home".

Comeback *Too Much Humbug* (1996) reflected poignantly on post-Mabo Australia

("We Shall Cry"), and smoulders: see "Makes You Feel", and Burarrwanga's brash defiance on the scorching "Koori Man". Recorded seven years before his untimely passing, excoriating live track "Yaka Bayungu" (2000) is eloquent proof of Burarrwanga's power as a performer.

Warumpi Band's fire still burns bright.

GARETH HIPWELL

The Sound of the Country

Various Artists *Buried Country: The Story of Aboriginal Country Music 1.5* Festival/Warner ★★★★★



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is advised that this review includes references to people who have died.

An expansive update on the original compilation (2000), *Buried Country 1.5* scores the second edition of Clinton Walker's comprehensive history of Indigenous country music. The collection spans genre, captivating immediately with Vic Simms' "Get Back Into the Shadows" (1973), while tracks such as Jimmy Little's "Shadow of the Boomerang" (1960) meet cutting social commentaries (Mop & the Drop Outs' "Brisbane Blacks"), sounds of a distant time (Maisie Kelly's "My Home in the Valley"), and paeans to country and culture. Beyond their oft-familiar stylistic vernacular – see the newer, roots-stacked inclusions of Disc 2 – these are palpably angry, boldly defiant, intensely personal songs, laying bare a world of outsider art hidden in plain view.

G.H.



Simms

Alanis's Multi-Million Seller

Alanis Morissette *Jagged Little Pill: Collector's Edition* Warner ★★★★★



So she's more than a little bitter, with both her ex(es?) and the record executives who dismissed her. So she hasn't got a technically amazing singing voice, and the contribution of gun co-writer and producer Glen Ballard – who turned her vitriol into something musically compelling – cannot be overstated. But let's not deny Alanis Morissette her important place in the feminist music canon. She may not have been completely DIY like Kathleen Hanna, but she sold a lot more records, and taught millions of teenage girls that it was OK to feel intense anger and express it. This twentieth anniversary four-disc collector's edition includes 10 (wisely) unreleased demos, an acoustic disc, and a live concert disc from her heyday in London. An essay written by Morissette that traces the record's conception and early meetings with Ballard and manager Guy Oseary is, like *Jagged Little Pill*, uncompromisingly honest.

ANNABEL ROSS



Rediscovering Eighties McCartney

A pair of reissues from McCartney's most neglected solo era reveal gems worth reassessing



Tug of War
MPL/Concord
★★★★½



Pipes of Peace
MPL/Concord
★★★★½

The new frontier for Beatlemaniacs: reclaiming Eighties Paul. It's one of the weirdest areas of the man's career, full of buried treasures ripe for discovery. On the map of McCartney's music, fans usually avoid the Eighties as the zone marked "Here Be Broad Street". But the newly reissued *Tug of War* and *Pipes of Peace* prove it's worth the search, even if it means tiptoeing around a few toxic-waste dumps. Check out "So Bad", from 1983's *Pipes of Peace* – that piercingly bittersweet melody, the way his voice soars in the high notes ("there was a paain"), the modest ache of the chorus.

KEY TRACKS:
"Wanderlust",
"Here Today",
"Simple As That"

The Eighties production goop is tough to stomach (even from George Martin) and the lyrics are barely even a first draft, yet it's a lost Macca gem nobody else could have written or sung.

Tug of War arrived in 1982 as McCartney's first proper pop album in years – 1980's delightfully odd new wave experiment *McCartney II* had been a discreet way for him to resume his solo identity after ditching the Wings brand name. Stevie Wonder shows up twice on *Tug of War*: the Prince-like synth-funk jam "What's That You're Doing" and the not-remotely-Prince-like hit "Ebony and Ivory". But the highlights are the piano ballads "Wanderlust" and "Here Today", McCartney's startlingly personal elegy for John Lennon: "What about the time we met?/I suppose you could say we were playing hard to get." This reissue adds outtakes that didn't fit conceptually because they were too much like Silly Wings Songs: the New Orleans shuffle "Stop, You Don't Know Where She Came From" and the bagpipe-crazed country B-side "Rainclouds".

Pipes of Peace holds up even better, despite a certain something called "Say Say Say", the mega-smash Michael Jackson



duet, perhaps neither artist's finest moment. Both Macca and Jacca sound more unhinged on their other duet, an utterly nonsensical Philly-soul ditty called "The Man" – not to be confused with 1976's "Listen To What the Man Said", though it's probably the same man. There's also the fantastic outtake "Simple As That" and "The Other Me", where he croons this immortal bit of Macca verse: "I know I was a crazy fool/For treating you the way I did/But something took hold of me/And I acted like a dustbin lid." Don't let the dustbin lid close on Eighties Paul. The goodies are there if you do some digging. **ROB SHEFFIELD**



A Tribe Called Quest
People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm Sony
★★★★★
Tribe's classic debut is given a 25th anniversary makeover

This 25th anniversary edition comes with a volume-boost remaster and mildly diverting remixes from CeeLo Green, Pharrell and J. Cole, none of which add a great deal to this already perfect relic of golden age hip-hop, when sampling wasn't such a restrictive legal hurdle and macho posturing wasn't a rap album prerequisite. Their beats and rhymes may have developed into something more accomplished, but Q-Tip, Phife, Ali and Jarobi – still teenagers when this was released – were never again as playful, experimental and downright weird as they were on this inventive mix of youthful expression and genre-hopping samples. **JAMES JENNINGS**

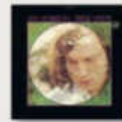


The Velvet Underground
Loaded: Re-Loaded 45th Anniversary Edition Warner
★★★★½

Before Lou Reed split with VU, he left us with this gem

Some purists downplay the final VU album because John Cale was gone, Moe Tucker didn't drum on it and new guy Doug Yule was too much of a presence. Perhaps "Sweet Jane", "Rock & Roll" and "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'" just aren't iconic enough for some. *Loaded* is the Velvets trying to sound commercial. Being who they were, it came out wonderfully off-kilter. "Who Loves the Sun" could be a sunshine-pop song, but lyrically Lou Reed turned flower power on its head. Not shelling out for the six-disc reissue? This single disc offers a few extra tracks including Tucker's girlish vocal on "I'm Sticking With You". Purists be damned. **B.D.**

Van Morrison's Early LPs Celebrated



Astral Weeks
Warner
★★★★



His Band and the Street Choir
Warner
★★★★½



Van Morrison devotees know that the Irishman's most compelling early work can be found on *Astral Weeks* and *His Band and the Street Choir*. Now, Warner has remastered and repackaged these two fan favorites for CD and iTunes with bonus tracks. The results are passable but not particularly compelling.

The weird and hazy *Astral Weeks* sounds cleaner and louder on this release, but nostalgic listeners may find themselves longing for their scratchy vinyl copies. More than most albums, *Astral Weeks* was made for vinyl: its eight tracks divide neatly in

two, and its quieter passages are enhanced by crackle.

The diverse *His Band and the Street Choir* benefits more from the clean-up job, and has the better bonus tracks. Of its five new cuts, an alternate take of the exquisite "I'll Be Your Lover, Too" stands out: Morrison's looser vocal has a jazzy feel that takes the song elsewhere.

On *Astral Weeks*, the pick of the four bonus tracks is an extended "Slim Slow Slider". Hardcore fans will appreciate these rarities; casual listeners may struggle to hear much of a difference.

DAN F. STAPLETON



SEAMLESS
Kate Winslet
shines in this
Aussie drama

Revenge Is All Sewn Up

Kate Winslet joins an all-star cast in Australian drama that confounds expectations

The Dressmaker

Kate Winslet, Judy Davis,
Liam Hemsworth, Hugo
Weaving

Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse

★★★★

DIRECTOR JOCELYN MOORHOUSE'S first feature in about two decades blazes with colliding tones, story types and theatrical realism. Anyone expecting a nostalgic romance or dinky-di drama will be thrown by *The Dressmaker's* seam of darker undercurrents. Because glimpses of sunshine are not what must clear the storm clouds tied to the turbulent homecoming of Tilly (composed Kate Winslet).

Forced from her small, isolated home-town as a child, due to being accused of murder, Tilly returns in 1951 as a sophisticated adult. Whether she

seeks revenge or catharsis isn't clear, yet her presence unpicks the veil of civility that covers the scourge of accepted abuse.

Working from Rosalie Ham's bestselling novel, Moorhouse concocts a Western fable from Tilly's quest for identity and comeuppance. Veering from ocker humour to pointed revelations, romance to ostentatious violence, the film-making palette is vast yet enjoyably cohesive.

A homegrown ensemble compliments well the chief trio of Winslet, Judy Davis and Liam Hemsworth. As Tilly's mad mother, Davis savours her bittersweet bickering with Winslet. While Davis is in vintage form, Hemsworth shines as the noble love interest who helps the heightened cautionary tale maintain its palpable heart.

BEN MCEACHEN

The Fall of Armstrong

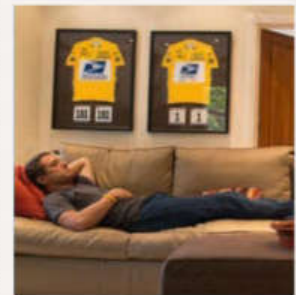
The Program

Ben Foster, Chris O'Dowd

Directed by Stephen Frears

★★½

There have been a few documentaries about Lance Armstrong's exceptional disintegration, but *High Fidelity* director Stephen Frears has delivered the first feature. Based on a book by sport journalist David Walsh (who chased Armstrong for years about drug allegations), *The Program* spans the professional career of the disgraced Tour De France "legend". While all that is presented might be true, Frears' packaging of a competitive life surges with an offputting sense of venom. Perhaps Armstrong was the win-at-any-cost jerk he is depicted as, and Ben Foster dissolves convincingly into the



obsessed cyclist. But Armstrong seems deliberately reduced to a narcissistic caricature, to deny him any sympathy or humanity. *The Program* capably plays with sound and vision to suggest it is a multi-faceted look at a proven cheat. The unnecessary vibe of witch-hunt becomes so pervasive, though, it can be hard to go the distance.

B.M.

Mistress America

Greta Gerwig, Lola Kirke

Directed by Noah Baumbach

★★★★

UNITE, ENTHUSIASTS OF *Frances Ha* – director Noah Baumbach and his shining star and co-writer, Greta Gerwig, have reteamed to create a screwball diversion that vibrates with smarts, sexiness and comic desperation. That's *Mistress America*, starring the delectable Gerwig as Brooke, a Manhattan dynamo in design, aerobics, restaurants and whatever else can absorb her manic energy. If Brooke got off the fast track and took a good look at herself, she'd scream. Her latest distraction is Tracy (Lola Kirke), a freshman at Barnard whose mother is set to marry Brooke's dad. Disaster? You bet. But not before Brooke and Tracy exploit each other and end up at the Connecticut home of Brooke's ex-fiance, where the full cast of characters converges in a series of slammed doors and shouting matches. Baumbach (*The Squid and the Whale*) is clearly having a blast and, as usual, packing a sting into every line. Gerwig is the mistress of all things funny and fierce, and her by-play with Kirke (*Gone Girl*) is killer. You won't know what hit you. **PETER TRAVERS**

99 Homes

Andrew Garfield, Michael Shannon, Laura Dern

Directed by Ramin Bahrani

★★★

BEFORE IT GOES OFF THE rails in the final stretch, *99 Homes* is a riveting rattle-rouser that thinks it can make a difference. In these days when Hollywood typically dulls our wits, Ramin Bahrani's *99 Homes* has a fire in its belly. It's spoiling to be heard.

Michael Shannon explodes onscreen as Rick Carver, a Florida real-estate vulture who makes his living evicting families from their homes. When Rick does just that to Dennis Nash (Andrew Garfield), an unemployed construction worker and single dad with a

preteen son (Noah Lomax) and a mother (a superb Laura Dern) in his care, Dennis wants revenge. At first. Later, he joins the bastard in capitalising on poverty for easy profit. Maybe not so easy. Dennis still has a working conscience. But for how long?

In the script Bahrani wrote with Iranian partner Amir Naderi, the American dream has passed from nightmare to

larious because its lovers spit at rom-com clichés. Maybe not as spittingly as in *Bachelorette*, Headland's debut film, but enough to give us two assholes to root for.

They are Jake (Jason Sudeikis) and Lainey (Alison Brie), the girl he deflowered while they were students at Columbia in 2002. They reunite at rehab for sex addicts – Jake is a pussyhound, and Lainey still hooks

so good on *Mad Men*, can do anything, breaking you up at a kindergarten dance (Lainey is a teacher) while high on molly, or just plain breaking your heart. This movie does that to you. It makes you laugh till it hurts. **P.T.**

No Escape

Owen Wilson, Lake Bell, Pierce Brosnan

Directed by John Erick Dowdle

★

STAY ALERT IF YOU'RE A white guy from Texas (Owen Wilson) who's just taken a job in a conveniently unnamed country in Southeast Asia (the film was shot in Thailand, which should sue). It's tough shit for this dude that the locals, pissed-off at a U.S. imperialist grab at their water supply, have just staged a coup and are on a bloodlust rampage, leaving bodies everywhere. If you're like Wilson's clueless American named Jack and don't turn your middle-management skills into killer 007 survival instincts stat, these avatars of the "yellow peril" will rape your wife Annie (Lake Bell) and kill your bratty, pre-teen girls, Lucy (Sterling Jerins) and Beeze (Claire Geare). Fortunately a former 007 does show up in the roguish person of Pierce Brosnan's Hammond, a grizzled Brit with ties to . . . oh you can probably guess since the movie is crushingly predictable. As for the nonwhite members of the community, who cares? This movie doesn't.

That's the setup for the shamelessly risible and racist *No Escape*, the screwiest mix of suspense and stereotypes since Michael Bay was a pup. *Horror-show* director John Erick Dowdle (*Quarantine, As Above, So Below*), who wrote the script with his bro Drew Dowdle, boasts a technical proficiency with handheld camerawork, jittery editing and nonstop gore. This movie really moves. But a fleet of tanks couldn't help the brothers Dowdle push past the plot holes in this racist mess. Wilson and Bell look out of breath, but from running not acting. Even in the dog days of summer, when quality escapism is rare, seeing *No Escape* would have to qualify as an act of audience desperation. **P.T.**



(1) Indie infidelity. Greta Gerwig and Lola Kirk in *Mistress America* (2) Garfield and Shannon try to sell you a bill of goods in *99 Homes*. (3) Sudeikis and Brie play sex addicts in *Sleeping With Other People*.



living hell. The vicious cycle can be seen on Dennis' tortured face. This is Garfield's best performance since *The Social Network*. The film asks, "Is there a bailout for moral bankruptcy?" It's not a pretty answer. **P.T.**

Sleeping With Other People

Jason Sudeikis, Alison Brie

Directed by Leslye Headland

★★★½

SOMEONE HAS CALLED THIS comic raunchfest "*When Harry Met Sally* with assholes". Since that someone is the film's writer-director, Leslye Headland, she's allowed. But she's also selling herself short. *Sleeping With Other People* hits the sweet spot between hot and hi-

up with a college creep (Adam Scott), now an Ob-Gyn who's engaged to someone else. They decide to become friends without benefits. Assholes!

All this would collapse if Headland didn't keep things crackling, especially when Jake shows Lainey how to masturbate with a tea jar. Even when the laughs are spotty, the actors stay on point. Sudeikis, late of *SNL*, is terrific, showing an unexpected capacity for feeling as well as fun. And Brie,

The Summer Of Schumer

Amy Schumer bursts into the mainstream with her TV show and a movie By Michael Adams



Trainwreck

Amy Schumer, Bill Hader

Directed by Judd Apatow

★★★



Inside Amy Schumer

Amy Schumer

Created by Amy Schumer

★★★★



ROYAL PAIN
Amy Schumer is the new queen of comedy

Few pop culture figures have gone from near-anonymity to household-name as fast as Amy Schumer. But while a blockbuster movie put her on the mainstream radar, her TV show offers the purer dose of the comedic superstar.

Trainwreck's party-girl Amy is a version of herself in that she's a hard-drinking, pot-smoking sexual libertine very much living life on her own terms. But once she becomes hooked on Bill Hader's gentle sports doctor, this Amy has to choose between her wild ways and a tamer lifestyle. Though the movie is broadly funny, director-producer Judd Apatow's stock-in-trade male stoners never have to fully pack up their bongos the way our girl-hero does for a happy multiplex ending. A better – though financially riskier – film might've seen Hader take the stick out of his arse to win over the rude and rambunctious Amy.

But as a blockbuster hit, *Trainwreck* is no bad thing if it increases the audience for *Inside Amy Schumer* tenfold. Seasons 1 and 2 offer her in awesomely unapologetic form, with drugs, drinking, race, gender, genitalia, sexually transmitted diseases, social media isolation, buttholes, porn, scat porn and all else subjected to her sunny disposition and scathing wit in pacey sketches, stand-up bits and on-the-street and in-the-seat interviews. While *Trainwreck* feels like a sampler, *Inside Amy Schumer* is her showcase – and deservedly won her the Emmy this year.



The Affair S1

Dominic West, Ruth Wilson

Cr. by Hagai Levi, Sarah Treem

★★★★½

Now into its thrilling second season, *The Affair* plays like a post-modern literary soap opera for TV's Golden Age. Dominic West (McNulty from *The Wire*) is a struggling New York novelist with a wife (Maura Tierney) and four kids who slowly falls in love and lust with a fiery upstate waitress (Wilson, from *Luther*). Told from alternate he-said, she-said viewpoints, and framed with a flashback murder mystery, this exploration of infidelity's seductive-destructive allure involves us deeply with an ensemble of flawed characters who're alive with desire, decency, passion and regret.



Deathgasm

Milo Cawthorne

Directed by Jason Lei Howden

★★★★½

And the award for movie title of the year goes to . . . *Deathgasm*. This goofy New Zealand horror-comedy is smarter than it sounds as it pays tribute to splattermeisters Peter Jackson and Sam Raimi while satirising all things heavy metal. After his mum goes to jail, headbanging teen Brodie (Milo Cawthorne) winds up in Kiwi suburbia, bored and bullied until he forms a metal band and unwittingly raises a demon army by playing a "Black Hymn". Fast, very funny and exceedingly gory, this is great fun, though too much of it takes place in cinematic darkness.



UnREAL S1

Shiri Appleby

Created by Marti Noxon, Sarah Gertrude Shapiro

★★★★

Set behind the scenes on a dating show called *Everlasting*, bitter satire *UnREAL* pumels the puppet masters who pull the strings to make reality TV. Co-created by a former *Bachelor* honcho, the show has the ring of truth as wrung-out field producer Rachel (Appleby) returns under tyrannical executive producer Quinn (Constance Zimmer, delicious) for another season of spinning cheap fame-whoredom into glossy ratings gold. *UnREAL* quickly becomes as addictive as the genre it eviscerates, creating TV's most marvellous new villains in the process.



Inside Out

Voices of Amy Poehler, Bill Hader

Directed by Pete Docter, Ronnie Del Carmen

★★★★

Pixar's latest is a pop culture psychology primer rendered in primary colours. Eleven-year-old Riley's move to a new city results in literally competing emotions – Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Disgust – all of whom manifest in her vivid interior landscape that's part spaceship and part theme park. Superbly animated and voiced by Amy Poehler, Bill Hader and Lewis Black, it's at once silly and sophisticated, teaching kids and reminding adults that it's OK to feel bad and mad sometimes and that emotions get more complex as you get older.

NIGHT WOLVES

[Cont. from 89] of an eggplant, pointing at a nearby area. “The pro-Russian side was shelling to make them leave.” She and her husband, along with other residents, spent three weeks living in a dank warren of rooms in her building’s basement. Several soiled mattresses still lie on the dirt floor. “It was very cold. We ate what we had in our houses,” she says. Emerging from the basement one day, Tamara continues, she discovered a man sitting in his car. He had been decapitated by shrapnel from an artillery shell. “Sometimes we buried locals here in the garden, and after we transferred them to the cemetery,” she says, looking at a tangled bed of morning glories. But someone mined the cemetery, and so she and the others often left the bodies buried where they were.

The war in Donbass began to assume its own runaway logic. As civilian casualties mounted and both sides committed atrocities, people inevitably joined the conflict as much for reasons of ethnicity or national sovereignty as retaliation. Both sides pumped out propaganda: Pro-Kiev Ukrainians were “neo-Nazi fascists”; pro-Russians “terrorists”. There were reports of concentration camps, crucifixions of children. In Novosvitlivka, Russian media alleged Ukrainian forces had shot some residents and locked others inside the church, then mined the area. (The church’s priest tells me, however, the Ukrainians handed out meals, and no one was killed despite two direct hits from artillery shells.) In this distorted reality, it was as George Orwell wrote: “Everyone believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side.”

One afternoon, Taras and I drive into the rolling farm country outside Luhansk to an Orthodox church perched atop a hill. It had been built by Nikolai Tarasenko, an enigmatic Russian archaeologist who, inspired by divine instruction, had quit his profession in the 1990s to build a “temple” in the Donbass. The site has since become famous and, according to Taras, Tarasenko is also known as a hermit philosopher and sometime prophet who might offer tidings of the war. A member of the Cossacks, the legendary horsemen who once guarded the Russian empire’s remote frontier, he has been fighting since the beginning of the conflict.

“Before the war, we prayed and built,” says Tarasenko, who is in his late sixties with few remaining teeth and a rheumy eye, sitting at a long kitchen table. “And when war came we took the weapon, and now we are praying and fighting.” He has spent the past 20 years building the church, but it remains unfinished – the conflict appears to have entirely subsumed his work. Every week, a small detachment of locals – often including Tarasenko himself – travels to the front line about 65 ki-

lometres away. The war has passed some point of no return, Tarasenko feels, and he cannot stop fighting. Kiev has “special teams” that would kill him and has deployed mercenaries – a story widely disseminated by Russian propaganda.

Rising from the kitchen table, Tarasenko leads us outside to see the church. Inside the bare sanctuary, he ascends a rickety ladder, then steps out onto a small balcony with a commanding view of the valley. “The great war is still to come,” he tells me. “According to the prophecies, the war will move north from Luhansk and Donetsk to the Russian Federation and west to Ukrainian territory. It’s the third world war – U.S., Europe, Asia. Everyone will be involved. I don’t want it, but I have seen it.”

IN AUGUST, A LONG COLUMN OF BIKERS rode into Sevastopol to inaugurate the Night Wolves’ 2015 multiday bike show, “The Forge of Victory”. Astride a motorcycle accented with crocodile skin, the Surgeon led the procession. Vitaly was close behind, along with hundreds of bikers from Grozny, Tatarstan, Belarus and Tajikistan, and even one group from Siberian Yakutsk that had travelled nearly 16,000 kilometres. The Surgeon had remained cryptic about the show’s content, but a few details had been revealed: The event would showcase the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany and, according to the club’s website, train “young people in the spirit of patriotism, on building a peaceful alternative to the Maidan to destroy Ukraine – an alternative to the ruthless terrorism and its sponsors.”

On the show grounds, thousands of fans erected camping tents around the slurry pond. There were recreational bikers, members of other clubs, teenagers, families with babies. There were stalls selling kebabs and beer and booths about animal husbandry. The Black Sea Fleet had a recruiting booth. The Surgeon was seemingly everywhere: posing for photos, signing autographs, unveiling a new prototype motorcycle dubbed the “Stalinets”.

Around midnight on August 21st, the main show began. An air-raid siren wailed ominously. A Nazi bomber, suspended from a building, rose above the crowd. Explosions followed, clouds of smoke. A Russian mother ran clutching her daughter in terror; a man on fire leapt from a balcony. Suddenly, the guttural voice of the Surgeon, from a crow’s nest above the battle, rolled over the crowd: “The great patriotic war was the war of good with evil, light with shadow, love with hate, paradise with hell.”

German panzer tanks and columns of SS soldiers appeared. They mercilessly executed several men and herded Russian women and children onto flatbed trucks. Then, from the shadows: a Red Army brigade. Firing their rifles and machine guns,

they advanced forward. The SS began to fall one by one. There was a triumphant yell, a surging charge by the Russians. A Soviet T-34 tank, a museum piece brought in from Volgograd, rumbled forward. The Germans were finished.

From his perch, the Surgeon declared, “The Holy Grail of the victory with never-ending shine and eternal light, the same as the Burning Bush, was shining in the darkest years of Russian grief. From this Grail we were watering the faint sprout of the new state, Russian State, and it was growing among the droughts and gales.”

Various dignitaries from Crimea, including the governor of Sevastopol, watched from a VIP platform. The Night Wolves had invited Putin, but he chose not to attend. The president’s absence was perplexing, given his staunch support of the Surgeon, though the Russian press hardly mentioned it. Shortly after, however, Russian marines and tanks were spotted at a Syrian air base. Within weeks, Putin unveiled a major diplomatic push – more military aid, a possible peace plan for Syria – to shore up the country’s embattled president, Bashar al-Assad. Syria’s dire circumstances, many analysts speculated, had presented Putin with an irresistible gambit: bolster an ally and divert attention from the conflict in Ukraine, while also allowing Russia to once more reassert itself as a forceful presence on the global stage.

As the show continued, giant pneumatic hammers swung up and down and a small army of Soviet proletariat – metallurgists, factory labourers, dancing atomic-bomb makers – began to heroically rebuild the country. The show was an unrecognisable heir of the Night Wolves’ early productions. They had been loose, homespun affairs, bawdy and anarchic: Men dressed as knights jousting on motorcycles. Women stripteasing with snakes. One biker even waving an American flag. “I still have the freedom. I always have it – maybe not so much as before,” the Surgeon told me when we spoke in Sevastopol. “But now other things are more important for me: That is the struggle for my motherland, and I’m a soldier in this struggle. It’s my fight, it’s my war for my country.”

The spectacle reached its stirring climax. Fireworks erupted in the sky. A contingent of Night Wolves rolled out to greet the large crowd cheering for the performance that was a looking glass reflecting a Russia as it had been, as they might be persuaded to see it once more: unbowed, undiminished, fearsome. At least 100,000 people on the show grounds, with millions more watching the live broadcast on state television, looked upward as a gilded coat of arms bearing a Soviet star, a czarist double-headed eagle and ears of wheat – a heraldic nationalist symbol of the Night Wolves’ own creation – rose high above the crowd in Sevastopol. It was an empire production. 

Ben Marwe, Bad//Dreems

The singer/guitarist on throwing tantrums, fighting onstage and stealing
By Rod Yates

The last time I stole something

I stole some body lotion moisturiser from our hotel on the weekend. It smelt really good and made my face feel nice and clean. I think it's there to be stolen that stuff. If it's smaller than my hand I'm allowed to steal it.

The last thing I regretted eating

When we filmed our filmclip for "Hiding to Nothing" in Andamooka we played under this shed and it stunk like cat piss, and for some reason in front of all the locals I said, "If I'm going to come to Andamooka I may as well make myself a local by eating some dirt." And I put a whole handful of dirt in my mouth and it was the rankest thing I've ever tasted in my life.

The last time I tried to get something for free

I'd never do that, I feel too awkward about it. My girlfriend tries to do it but I can't do it. She gets angry at me 'cause I tip cab drivers too much or I put too much on for tips at the restaurant just 'cause I feel bad. I don't like getting stuff for free.

The last thing I'd do if the world was ending

I don't know why but I have to go with my first thought here, and for some reason my first thought was get naked. Come into the world naked, go out naked.

The last time I threw a tantrum

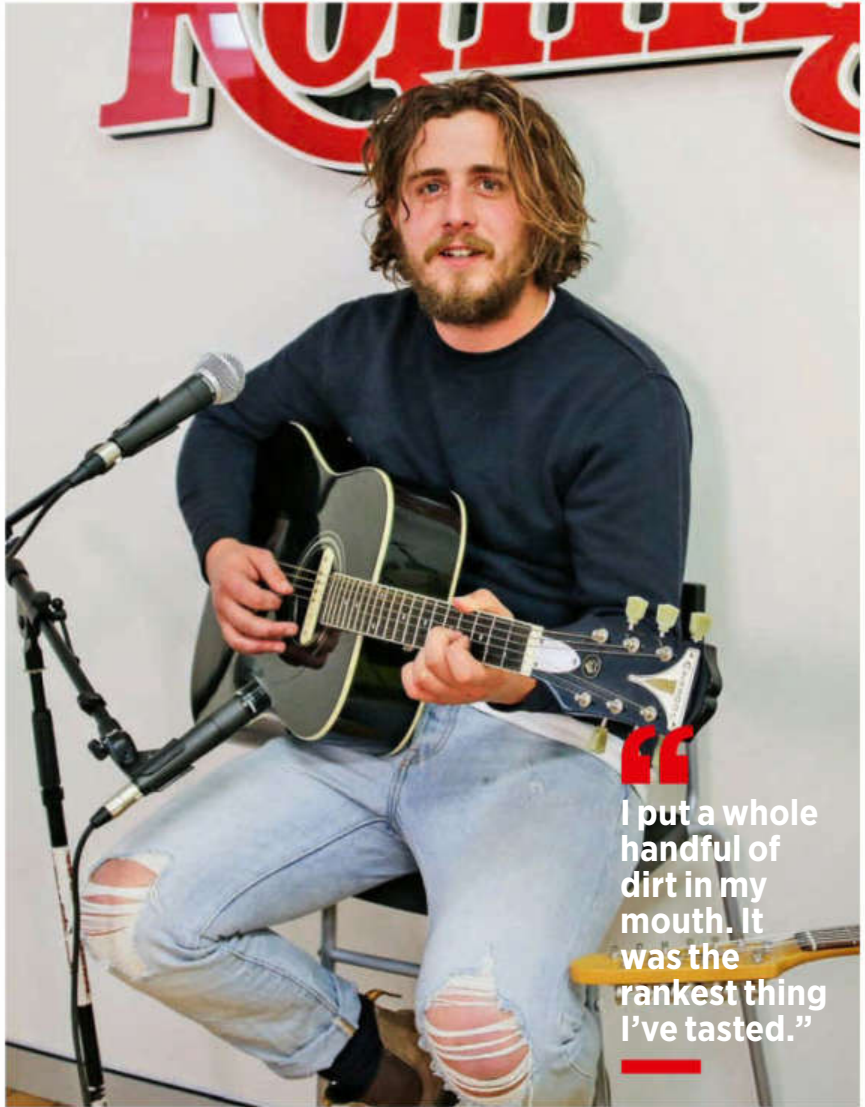
Three or four years ago. I used to throw so many tantrums. But now I've gotten a bit older I don't really do it anymore, I can't be bothered. When we were doing a tour with Children Collide in 2012 I used to have the worst tantrums sitting in the back seat [of the van]. Because we'd do the crossword or a quiz and I'd give an answer and someone would laugh at me, and then I'd throw the crossword out the window.

The last fight I had

I had a wrestle with a friend onstage in Adelaide at our gig. He came up onstage and just started grabbing me during a song, I think it was "Bogan Pride", and we started rolling around on the ground. It was just a friendly fight but there were a few punches thrown. The other guys just kept playing.

The last time I threw up

I usually never throw up but I did throw up onstage at the last Adelaide show two weeks ago. I wasn't drunk, I



I put a whole handful of dirt in my mouth. It was the rankest thing I've tasted."

was genuinely exhausted. It was the end of the show, and I was so tired from screaming for an hour that I just turned around and threw up in front of the drum kit. I didn't know what to do, it just came up. I don't think anyone knew, it was a bit too chaotic.

The last thing I do before going onstage

We all give each other a kiss on the shoulder. It's a bit of a thing.

The last bad dream I had

Saturday night, I had a really awful dream. I think there was a lizard involved, and Alex [Cameron] our guitarist was doing something weird. I can't really remember the dream, but I remember waking up in a cold sweat. It was weird.

The last thing I had in my mouth

My finger, probably biting my nails or something like that.

The last time I was embarrassed

Pretty much every gig we play. I always walk off the stage thinking, why did I say that, or I should have said this at that point in time, or why did I look like a dickhead at this point in time?

The last band that blew me away

Yesterday when I heard the new Drones single, "Taman Shud". The lyrical content sums up everything I feel about Australia pretty much. It's a really good song.

The last time I forgot a lyric

Friday night. I just can't get "Blood In My Eyes" right. The verses are so similar and I always mix them up and jumble them up. I don't think people notice. I don't even know the lyrics for that song, I just say the same ones over and over again.





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